

THE
Theatrical Review:

FOR

The Year 1757, and Beginning of 1758.

CONTAINING

CRITICAL REMARKS

ON THE

PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

Of both the Theatres.

Together with

OBSERVATIONS on the DRAMATIC
PIECES, New, or Revived ; that have been
Performed at either HOUSE within that Period.

To which is added,

A SCALE of the COMPARATIVE MERIT of the
above PERFORMERS.

*Bona Bonis ferri reor æquom Maxime,
Ut Mala Malis*—

PLAUTUS.

*Eadem Histrioni sit lex quæ summo Viro ;
Virtute ambire oportet, non fautoribus ;
Sat habet fautorum semper, qui bene agit.*

Idem.

L O N D O N :

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

IT is a very just observation of that very indifferent writer Abbé Le Blanc, that England is most properly characterised as the land of faction. Divisions among the people of other countries arise only from their higher concerns; but with us every thing is made an affair of party; and the spirit of it is carried even into our diversions. This would be scarce credited by foreigners; and yet almost every coffee-house, and every news-paper, prove the truth of the observation; no body can talk or write about our theatres, but he is immediately possessed with this demon of party, and praises or condemns, not from his feelings, but his prejudices.

It is something very remarkable, that whilst our theatres are so flourishing, the managers of them so successful, and acting is the constant topic of conversation and criticism, we have not one single treatise upon the subject written with knowledge or impartiality. A certain voluminous gentleman, whose pen has traversed through every region of science, from architecture down to cookery, favoured us a few years ago with a volume called *THE ACTOR*, taken from *LE COMEDIEN* of *St. Albine*, a work of no great depth or precision in the original, but in the English dress is the most motley, unconnected, unmeaning farrago, that ever sprung from the fertile brain of this literary Proteus. *St. Albine*, though an author of little force, is consistent in his plan, and just in his observations upon the French actors; but his hasty translator introduces the English performers without method or meaning, and praises or condemns as his personal likings or resentments dictated; and therefore it is impossible for the most attentive reader to form a consistent idea of any one performer upon either stage, from what this author may have said of him.

THE

THE writer of the following sheets arrogates no merit to himself, but that of impartiality ; his judgment is neither warped by his theatrical connections, or prejudiced by his theatrical disappointments ; he can warmly proclaim the merit of the actor, without flattering the author, or being blind to the defects of the manager. He will not fear to differ from the unjust, and indiscriminate approbation of an audience, nor be ashamed to drag forth neglected worth which may, *by particular arts*, have been secreted from the public : he looks upon a polite well regulated theatre to be of more consequence to a nation, than is generally imagined ; and consequently the managers in their province, in a certain degree, are as much the objects of public attention and rebuke, as the managers of the state. The public pay freely and generously, and have an undoubted right to examine, censure, and demand redress ; and if folly and obstinacy on one hand, and self-sufficiency and over-weening success on the other, should despise and over-look our just demands, I say, if this should be the case, the remedy is in our own hands.

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We never set them up to fright ourselves ;
 We know they're rags————

NOR is it to be understood from the above premises, that the writer of the following pages means to insinuate, that the malignity and slander which is at times so freely dealt forth in the daily and weekly papers, is just and warrantable ; he openly disavows such partiality, the public ought not to suppose any grievance, till it is proved ; and if these outrageous sons of the quill will please, by the publication of their several performances, to manifest their hard treatment, the town will then judge candidly and act with spirit ; nor, on the other hand, will he join the cry of those partial admirers, who preach up a manager's infallibility, and think every man who does not indiscriminately applaud with them a heretick to taste, genius and common sense. It is certain that there is a fault somewhere ; and if the vanity of an author may ask too much, the partiality of a patentee may grant too little ; and therefore neither the one nor the other are proper and disinterested judges : it is to be wished for the satisfaction of all that are concerned, that the power of accepting or

rejecting performances was not so intirely vested in the managers. I have nothing in particular to alledge against the knowledge of Mr. R— or the impartiality of Mr. G—, but I most sincerely think, that if a committee of ingenious men were selected to look into the demands and rights of authors, and appoint what dramatic pieces should be exhibited ; the town would then be more satisfied, the poets less angry, and consequently our modern Roscius, for whose talents no one has a more sincere regard than I have, would escape that continual torrent of resentment, which disappointed writers shower upon him from all quarters ; in short, the stage is certainly the common field of the Muses, and every man of merit in this branch of poetry, ought to have his right and turn of commoning ; and if the lord of the manor will arrogantly assume the power of inclosing it for himself and friends, the aggrieved fraternity must remonstrate ; and should that fail, they must down with the pales and fences, and turn in their poetical tits, to partake of the sweetest and richest pastures of all Parnassus.



CRITICAL REMARKS

ON THE

PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

Of the two Theatres.

DRURY-LANE.

Mr. GARRICK.

H Ackrey'd as this subject has been by pens of all ranks in literature, and unequal as I feel myself to the task; this gentleman's merit is a theme I should be happy to undertake for any readers but English-men. Was this essay destined to the information of foreigners, with what eagerness should I catch at an opportunity of putting their utmost vanity to a non-plus, for a parallel in this one particular! Conscious of not having exceeded the limits of simple truth, how my national pride would enjoy their amazement, nay, even their incredulity! but to English readers, what can I say of Mr. Garrick, but what they have felt, but what they are now feeling? From him, excellence but barely answers the public expectation; he pleases, but astonishes no more.

What way of life Mr. Garrick was first intended for, I could never learn with any degree of certainty; some say he was intended for the

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bar, others for the Oporto-trade. This, I am assured of, whatever he may have been bred to, he was incontestably born AN ACTOR; for if you except that worn-out objection to his stature, so well answered by his success, nature, perhaps, never before shewed such profusion in adapting any man to any particular purpose, as she has done in fitting out this gentleman for the whole business of the stage. This may be easily evinced, and his success accounted for, if we take a slight review of her gifts.

To begin, his face is strongly and finely featured, and yet on the whole not handsome, much less the contrary, but such as with a little of the dresser's help, may put on at will the appearance of either, and look equally the gallant gay Lothario, or an Abel Drugger, with all the different shades between those two extremes. It is rather lean, but not to deformity, and no more so, than as to leave its muscles clear from each other, and render their several actions distinct and visible at a great distance: those muscles have a wonderful activity, and follow with the most minute propriety the impression of the soul. That propriety and preciseness of motion in the muscles of the face in general, are no where more remarkable than in those of his eye-brows, the parts that are allowed by most painters to bear the greatest share in the expression of the passions, not even the eyes excepted*. For it is they that ascertain the meaning

* The eye-brow is the only part of the whole face where the passions best make themselves known, tho' many

ing and value of each look, by their various degrees of expansion, or contraction, and their different modes of elevation, depression, &c. There is also a cluster of wrinkles, which in the expression of all violent passions, take place beneath the brows. Those wrinkles, whenever jealousy, hatred, horror, &c. are to be exhibited, are strongly observable in our actor, and in Mrs. Cibber.

His eyes have been ever and universally admired ; their cut is what a painter would call bold and perfect ; their size big, the pupil large, strong, lively, active, and variable ; its colour dark, surrounded and set off with a due proportion of white, that gives to its every motion a brilliancy, a distinctness, a life, that speaks in every glance.

The symmetry of the rest of his person is no less favourable. Whether you consider the supple aptness of the parts, or their regular connexion and dependance on each other, whereby, whilst they all follow the impression received by the leading part (the face) they always keep within exact reciprocal proportions, and altogether form a whole, which conveys to our mind a perfect, consistent, and unmixed idea of the character or situation he intends to exhibit.

His voice—it might almost be natural to ask, which of them I am going to speak of ; for there is certainly something more than a difference of tone, in his manner of speaking

many will have it to be in the eyes. It is certain the pupil by its fire and motion, perfectly well shews the agitation of the soul, but then it does not express the kind or nature of such an agitation.

LE BRUN's *essay on the expression of the passions.*

the characters of a Richard, a Sir John Brute, a Lear, and an Abel Drugger. There is a real difference of sound and tenor; in a word, different voices, now tender and melting, now terrible and severe, then weak and broken, and sometimes whimpering, when the part requires it, as it does in honest Nab. Besides those general differences which he adapts to the several parts he acts, he is also rich in secondary variations and changes, for the situations and various succeeding passions through which the character is displayed; this last perfection is infinite, and the source of beauties innumerable that escape description.

I must mention one more peculiarity of Mr. Garrick's voice, that has always struck me. It is a sharp and piercing note he uses in his whispers, or *aside's*, which sends distinct sounds to the farthest bench of the galleries, without losing the appearance of a whisper.

To crown all these her gifts, nature has endowed him with a Cameleon-soul, a soul as mutable as his powers, or rather, it is a stock of souls of all ranks, from the king to the beggar, and of all characters, from the hero to the meanest wretch, which he puts off and on, as occasion requires. In a word, his exquisite feeling, like wax, lies ready to receive any impressions, either impassioned, characteristick, or humorous: hence that number of bold masterly touches, and original strokes of humour, pathetic, or terrible, that grace his performance. He feels, speaks, looks, and acts his parts, as if he had actually worked himself into a notion that he is really the man he intends to represent.

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I am conscious this has much more the appearance of a panegyrick, than of a criticism; but sure, though a critick, I am dispensed from speaking more than I feel, and from racking my invention, to supply the deficiency of my observation in this particular; nor do I grudge my brother-criticks their nicer discernment. The advantage of being less pleased, is not to be envied. Mr. Garrick may have faults, as an actor, but to me, I must own, they are as much lost as the spots in the sun, only visible to long-sighted astronomers.

Mr. Garrick, viewed as a manager, appears to me in a very different light: what might be said on this subject, might almost form a balance to the praises I give him as an actor. The scarcity of new performances, and the total deficiency of new performers, are very strong prejudices against him: both must proceed, in this stage-mad age, from the discouragements authors and actors meet with from the managers. It must be acknowledged however, that there never was in one season, such variety of entertainments of all sorts, as we have had this winter; a new farce, one new tragedy, three revived plays, with variety of dances. But all that is not sufficient. That answers barely our present exigencies; and as it is also his duty to provide for our future pleasures, I think the town has deserved so well of him, that he should think no trouble too great, that could answer that end, and speak his gratitude; which he may easily do, if he will consult his judgment more than his imaginary interest, and rear up a new race of actors, who may, in some measure, repair our loss of him, whenever that happens.

Mr.

Mr. WOODWARD.

What the aforesaid gentleman is as an actor in general, Mr. Woodward may be said to be, though in a less degree, as a comedian, a Proteus. Few are the species of characters which this actor has not attempted in comedy, and scarce any, but what he has performed with great applause; but this success has ever appeared to me remarkable, by a very peculiar oddity; to wit, that this excellent comedian has always met with a more general approbation from the public in those parts, for which nature, one would imagine from his exterior powers, least designed him. His figure is perfectly genteel, his voice smart, agreeable, and pliant, and both seem to point out the parts of a genteeler cast, as those which he is likeliest to look, and consequently to perform; and yet, as I said, I have ever observed, that it is not in those he succeeds best; and he never pleases his audience more, than when he is obliged to distort that genteel figure, into the awkward deportment of a Scrub, or the like; or to swell his voice out of its natural tenour, into the hectoring accents of a Bobadil.

That observation appears at first sight, a little paradoxical, but will, I imagine, on the least recollection, seem obvious and self-evident. It may be accounted for from the known feeling that performer has of every thing that is humorous. That feeling is so exquisite, that it makes him oftener *overstep*, as Shakespear terms it, *the modesty of nature*, than stop on this side of it. In short, over-doing is his only fault.

fault. Now if this be allowed to be true, who can then be surprized, that Mr. Woodward should please so much more in those grotesque whimsical characters, where exaggeration is in some measure allowable, there being in common life no standard of comparison to judge by, than in those of a genteeler sort, such as Beau Mizen, Foppington, Duretête, &c. where true life and real manners are to be expressed.

As to Mr. Woodward's merit as an Harlequin, I allow him none. He seems to me to have nothing of the whimsicalness of that absurd, and yet pleasing character, except the patch'd coat and vizor. Passion has, perhaps, no little share in the severity of this sentence; but who could see such talents so vilely disgraced, and not wish and strive to discountenance such a shameful misapplication of them?

Mr. Mossop.

Mr. Mossop made his first appearance on the stage of Dublin. His setting out was uncommonly auspicious and brilliant, and indeed, how few performers could ever boast such grounds of lasting and growing applause! understanding, person and voice, the first refined by a good education, the other two ready to receive the additional graces, that are the consequence of practice and observation, and the whole supported by the foreign, but ever useful advantage, of the favour of a leading party.*

* When Mr. Mossop commenced actor, the collegians of Dublin, who were his school-fellows, made a party, and exerted themselves greatly in his favour.

No wonder then Mr. Mossop should, with such helps, launch at once into first-rate characters, and sail at first so prosperously, as to get a-head of all the performers of the Irish stage.

It is a moot point, whether in the common run, such unlimited success is a greater advantage, or misfortune to young beginners ; for if it adds fuel to the ambition of some, and new eagerness to their labours ; it is equally certain, it has with others a contrary effect ; it puffs them up with vanity, and brings often along with it, sameness, carelessness, uncoothness, and all the rest of unimproving presumption's usual train ; and so they sink into contempt, and retain nothing of their former successes, but the privilege to rant and strut on, haunting still, solitary ghosts ! the places where they lived.

It is too often the case, but this reflexion is far from applicable to Mr. Mossop. The reader cannot but feel that he is entirely out of the question. His endeavours to improve himself, are no more a secret, than his improvements ; witness, his attempts in comedy, which, although they were not crowned with the fullest success, must, if continued, wear off in time what little faults there are in his deportment ; it will also give his voice a greater flexibility, the want whereof, renders sometimes his transitions from one passion to another, harshly sharp, unnatural, and declamatory ; but above all, he will learn to diversify in a greater degree his looks and postures, and new-stock his action with a suitable variety of motions, instead of that eternal round of gestures,

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out of which the machine-like race of mere tragedians are apt never to stray.

As I would not have my words forced by a malicious interpretation, out of their intended meaning, I here declare, that this reproach against mere tragedians, does not glance at Mr. Mossop, who certainly is not without variety. It can reach him no farther, than as he is apt to be a little too fond of certain favourite gestures and motions, which, being repeated, throw a sameness in most of the characters he acts. Some of those gestures or motions, are faulty in themselves, and should be given up entirely; such as turning his back on the rest of the *personæ*, and walking off from them at the close of every speech; and also an uncooth expression of impatience, which I shall more particularly mention in my sketch of Mrs. Pritchard; the others are only blameable, for being too much repeated.

Mr. PALMER.

Mr. Palmer first appeared in the country, in a travelling company. Mr. Garrick, like a skilful gardener, even then perceived and cherished the seeds of that growing merit, which, now like a tree transplanted into a more favourable soil, thrives, and every season improves in the quality, as well as quantity of fruits. He is an easy, and judicious actor; and I think, his performance of the parts of gentlemen, might be proposed as a model, if he was not a little given to mouthing; a fault very common, tho' so expressly condemned by Shakespear; and if he would take the trouble to give his body

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gait a little more steadiness, these two faults excepted, he is very good in his kind, and has beauties that are entirely his own. His expression of confusion, for example, is strong, agreeable, nay, laughable in a great degree, without the least impropriety, or detriment to his character of a gentleman.

There would be a kind of injustice, not to mention, among this actor's peculiar talents, his prodigious presence of mind on the stage, and a quickness, which never lets him, or any of the *personæ* on the stage with him, remain at a loss in case of failure of memory; he will then, rather than let the business of the stage stand or slacken, add something of his own, and what he adds, is never impertinent.

Mr. YATES.

Mr. Yates may be looked upon as a leading man among the class of secondary players. His particular turn for low humour, directed him early to the characters that require that qualification, and his good-sense checked his ambition from roving out of the province allotted him by nature. This prudent management, jointly, with his personal endowments, improved gradually by a proper succession of parts, has procured him a very great success, and affords him the agreeable prospect of a greater, if he will but continue his endeavours to please the town; the means are in his power, and need only to be applied. His voice has a touch of hoarseness, either natural or artificial, which, with a little alteration, may be easily adapted

dapted to the rough tones of the clown, or to the broken accents of old age.

His countenance in general, but more particularly his eyes, become the artificial wrinkles, and yet have archness enough not to look amiss in the characters of valets, of fools in Shakespear's plays, &c. Add to all this, that in general he dresses his parts with singular propriety.

These are his perfections ; now to his faults. The most considerable of them is, that he seldom knows where to stop in the expression of a scene of humour, and thereby overtops his part, so as to border on buffoonry and Bartholomew-fair ; another is, his being often imperfect in his parts, a fault not to be pardoned, if it is not natural.

Whilst my hand is in, I will mention another of his failings, which he has in common with all the performers, now on the English stage, (I except Mr. Garrick) but Mr. Yates is much more guilty of it than any other : it is his addressing almost incessantly the audience ; indeed, he carries it so far, as to throw all the upper part of his body over the orchæstra, a failing very ridiculous in soliloquies, but I think unpardonably absurd, when there is any body on the stage whom he might address.

Now I have mentioned soliloquies, I think it may be of service, to remind the theatrical gentlemen, that a soliloquy is nothing but the reflexions of a person who thinks aloud in a room, or elsewhere ; it should therefore be spoken walking to and fro, without looking or minding the spectators, who are never to be supposed present ; so Mr. Garrick speaks them mostly ; and I have always remarked, they are

more or less striking, in proportion, as he deviates from this method. He is not always clear from this fault, nay he is sometimes very guilty of it, as in the soliloquy of Richard, where he is introduced descanting on his own deformity; he speaks every word of it to the audience.

Mr. BERRY.

This veteran actor, grown grey in the service of the public, lifted young under the banners of the theatric muse. He has made one in almost every company that has been raised for upwards of thirty years, in different parts of this metropolis; he might have acquired great reputation, if the necessity of the different corps which he was engaged in, had not compelled his commanding officers, to put him upon some parts of the service for which nature had made him most unfit. His defects in tragedy are but too obvious, but were they less so, they should not be pointed out, as they are of a nature never to be conquered; yet, great as these defects are, they seldom destroy the effect of his judgment in acting tragedy, so as to make him disagreeable to his audience; nay, he may boast in one important particular, a superiority over most performers; I mean his sensibility and tenderness of heart, which make him look the friendly, loyal, or paternal distress with great truth. That feeling, tho' expressed somewhat uncoothly, never fails of its effect, because it is exhibited naturally, and flows spontaneous from the heart.

As to his exhibition in comedy (if you except Strickland, in the Suspicious Husband, and some

some more characters of that kind) it is in general masterly, but in nothing more so, than that his performance has more the appearance of reality, looks less like acting, than that of a great many more famous actors. This is what I fancy every spectator must have observed, who has seen Mr. Berry in his favourite characters, such as Sir Jealous Trafick, Sir Epicure Mammon, Jobson, Boniface, Caliban, &c. but especially in the last, where his art seems to vye with that of Shakespear, to make that out-of-the-way character look probable, natural, and pleasing, in spite of nature, probability, and the most hideous shape.

MR. HAVARD.

Mr. Havard is reported to be in his private deportment, a man of an easy behaviour, a quiet disposition, and a good understanding: such is his character as an actor, a character out of which he seldom strays, and he is rather apt to mould his part to his disposition, than his disposition to his part. He is a little too philosophic to make any great figure in his profession. His soul is a peaceable good haven, guarded on all sides from the storms of the passions, that might destroy the calm, or ruffle the surface. To this may be attributed the mediocrity of his success in tragedy; but whenever his parts happen to suit his real character, he is all perfection and truth, witness his Sir Charles Easy. This province of easy Gentlemen is very extensive in comedy, there being scarce one play in twenty, but has one or more characters of this cast. Mr. Havard therefore
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can never be counted an useless performer. Moreover, it is but common justice to acknowledge, that in tragedy, as well as in comedy, his appearance is ever decent, and free from the least charge of uncoothness, a quality rare and valuable, which will always make him welcome and desirous to the public.

There is one tragick part wherein his place will not be easily supplied, namely, that of Edgar, in *Lear*: that man must indeed look the gentleman, who will preserve as he does, the appearance of it, under the blanket and rags of poor Tom.

Mrs. CIBBER.

Mrs. Cibber (formerly Miss Arne) was at first a singer, and as such continued to please the town, till her marriage with Mr. Theophilus Cibber. That marriage, whatever it has proved to her personally, was certainly fortunate for the public, since it is partly to it we owe the pleasure we have since received from her performance as an actress. Till then, she had acted only singing parts; but even in those, the connoisseurs perceived that singing was not her only excellence; yet all the encouragements she received, could not prevail on her to make some farther tryals of her abilities in acting; but when she altered her condition, she then probably imagined she might, under the favour of a name then dear to the town, venture what her natural diffidence would not allow her to do before, when her performance could have no support, but her natural and acquired powers.

Nature

Nature had bestowed on her an agreeable figure, a bewitching voice, and above all, an exquisite feeling ; all which she has improved to a prodigious degree, by her application and good-sense ; and could she but add to these charms, a more majestic gait, and a little variety in her tones, my notions of tragedy-acting could not reach beyond her ; for although she cannot boast that particular justness of speaking, which consists in giving, by proper and well-chosen tones, the meaning of each word in the pronunciation, her feeling of the import of the speeches and situations, upon the whole is such, as throws a general justness on her delivery, and more than balances every trifling defect. It has been objected to her, that her action is not rich in descriptive gestures ; but in return, when passions are to be expressed, then she speaks to the eye, as well as to the ear, and through both to the heart.

She seldom appears in comedy, which makes me imagine she lays but little stress on her talents in that branch ; I will therefore so far make free with them, as to say, that her humour has never struck me ; but as far as justness, decency, and an easy carriage will go, I know no actress who can claim the superiority ; however, the public cannot encourage her too much in her attempts that way, since they are to reap the benefit of their indulgence, by the pleasure they will receive from her as a tragedian ; which pleasure will grow incessantly in proportion as she improves as a comedian. The connexion between the sock and the buskin is much more intimate than people are aware of.

Mrs. PRITCHARD.

When this favourite actress made her first appearance on the stage, it was not yet the custom for new performers to judge of their own merit, and presumptuously to impose themselves on the town in capital parts, which veteran actors formerly undertook with fear and diffidence. Mrs. Pritchard, who had less vanity than prudence, observed, they say, a gradation in the choice of the places *, where she exerted her talents; and after she had been received at one of the theatres royal, she went through a slow, but useful apprenticeship; till, by a judicious succession of parts, as by steps, she ascended to those top-characters in which she is at present the delight of the town. Among the many advantages which she could not but reap from this prudent conduct, may be ranked that singular propriety of speech, that vocal delivery ever varied, and ever just, which have recommended her so much to the public favour; accomplishments, which, even in an actor born, must be the result of time and an unwearied application. I cannot determine, nor is it important, which she attempted first, tragedy, or comedy; though it seems to have been the last, from the place where she first appeared. However, her success in both has been deservedly great; yet, were we to pronounce with the majority, we should pronounce her a greater

* This lady is said to have first acted at some of the fairs.

comedian, than tragedian. How to account for this variety of success, is a difficult matter; for, besides her propriety of speaking, which, in both is equal, she has in tragedy the advantage of looking in a greater degree the characters she commonly exhibits; namely, those of queens, mothers, wives. (I except Jane Shore, in the fifth act) Perhaps, the cause of the aforesaid variety of success is owing to her gesture; and indeed, the greatest blemish in this actress's tragick performance is the scantiness of her action, which, being confined to her wrist and fingers, seems less proper for the expression of that mixture of dignity and passions, which ought to constitute all tragick characters, than for the exhibition or description of those follies, that are the object of ridicule.

It has also been observed, that in impatience, or distress, she has a remarkable way of tossing her head; that motion, tho' it is expressive of her meaning, might certainly be supplied with something more graceful. It is the same motion I have touched upon in my character of Mr. Mossop.

Mrs. CLIVE.

Mrs. Clive (formerly Miss Raftor) like Mrs. Cibber, was at first admitted as a singer, and like her, enjoyed a very early, nay an earlier and greater approbation, than that celebrated actress: she made her first appearance in *Mithridates king of Pontus*, a tragedy by Nathaniel Lee, wherein, according to the established custom, was lamely introduced a song; that song Miss Raftor performed, dressed in boy's cloaths; she did it with an uncommon applause; and it

is from that time she dates the right of prescription, which she may now plead to the favour of the town. I have heard, she had occasionally attempted tragick parts; but if one may judge of the success of those tryals, by the faint traces they have left in the memory of those who were eye-witnesses of them, it was such, as did not allow her to wander through choice out of her natural sphere, comedy. There her qualifications are so peculiarly great, that they seem to exclude all possibility of her succeeding in any thing else; but of all those qualifications, those of her mind claim the superiority; her powers of expression are very indifferently matched to her sense of humour, and quick conception of nature and truth, in every circumstance of pleasantry or ridicule; they are like an ill-tempered sword, in the hands of a brave and skilful fencer, which tho' managed with art and spirit, will often fall short of the intended effect.

There are no characters in comedy, wherein she fails for want of feeling; but there are some that she feels beyond her means of expression; such as the Coquettes; in the exhibition whereof, it is obvious, that her exterior appearance does not favour the illusion; but even then she is most admirable, by the art with which she makes up in humour every deficiency of that sort; and I have often observed, that, whenever her want of exterior powers betrays her into exaggeration, she still pleases by the peculiarity of her affectation; like a skillful juggler, she always finds means, by a variety and speedy succession of humorous trifles, fantastic looks, and singular gestures, to dazzle the eyes of the keenest connoisseur, mock his observation, and

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cheat him into a pleasure, like the rest of the million.

In every other character, the greater your knowledge is, the greater satisfaction will accrue to you from her performance, and you will find her to be one of the few, whose merit is scrutiny-proof.

MISS MACKLIN.

This young actress is the daughter of the famous Mr. Macklin, a gentleman of a mixed reputation. Momus was her foster-father, Melpomene her nurse, and the stage her cradle; in plain English, the circumstances of her birth and family introduced her to an early acquaintance with the public, nor could her riper years have made a happier choice; young, very young, she began to please. Her first successes were indeed a little before-hand with her deserts, but she has since paid with interest in pleasure, what the town, like a thrifty guardian, had laid out in applause towards her encouragement.

She seems to have turned herself mostly to comedy; her daily success justifies her choice; but, as she has not yet ventured out of that set of plain characters, which suit the generality of young ladies, I don't think she ought to be pronounced a comedian, till she has tryed her hand in some parts of more humour and difficulty. What hinders her from attempting the parts of coquettes, which she may lay claim to, by right of her youth and figure? What, will no applause cure her of that excess of diffidence, which now cramps the growth of her talents; a diffidence, equally fatal to her improvement, and the pleasure of the public? What has she

attempted of late, that she has not performed with unlimited approbation? May not she look upon the reception she has lately met with in Sophia in the *Mâle-Coquette*; in *Violante* in the *Wonder*, and *Penelope* in the *Gamesters*, as an earnest of what she is to expect in future tryals? Why then should she set bounds to her own success?

Her parts in tragedy are but few, and have been hitherto confined to the tender, as better adapted to her years; wherein, though she does not at all rival Mrs. Cibber, we are not without hopes, to see her become in time a worthy successor to that charming actress. She is uncommonly striking, when labouring under affliction. It is true, she has not Mrs. Cibber's inimitable knitting of the brows; that is a gift of nature, as little to be acquired, as her eyes, nose, &c. but she has many of the requisites of tragedy, in common with that actress; her eyes, for example, besides the advantage of their colour, the most favourable of any to the expression, swim in that precious fluid, appointed by nature to bear the greatest share in painting the passions to the distant spectator. Her voice, though inferior to Mrs. Cibber's in point of melody, has great variety of tones, and abounds in those affecting accents, so instrumental in spreading the contagion of the tragick distress. All this, and more, has nature ready done to her hands: What pity, nay, what a crime, should she neglect to give it the finishing stroke by habit and practice!—But if it is the fault of the managers, that she is kept back, they are guilty of no less than breach of trust, towards the town, whose agents and stewards they are.

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Where-ever public approbation points, that way encouragements of all sorts should follow ; they should be continually on the watch, in order to guess and meet each wish of the town. Had this been their conduct, in all probability we should not miss, as we do, this lady's father. His merit, in a great number of characters, and his extensive knowledge in the business of the stage, were such as render the managers inexcusable, for not giving him employment, unless there is something more alledged and proved against him, than what has hitherto come to my knowledge.

Miss PRITCHARD.

This promising actress, is, as well as Miss Macklin, a child of the stage, but made her appearance much later. Her fond parents, willing to give her her choice of the profession she was to follow for life, waved their assent to her early desire of commencing actress, till she was of age to make that choice, without danger of being dazzled with the tinsel of the profession. It was but last season they yielded to her entreaties, and gave her leave to make her first tryal in Juliet. Never did young performer come on the stage so well accompanied : her fond mother, desirous to share with her dear daughter the danger of the day, came auxilliary, and brought along with her the favour of her name, together with a long train of good-natured prejudices, and that partiality which always waits on youth and beauty ; but unluckily, greedy Expectation made one among the attendants, and behaved a little like an epicure, who often despises a very good feast, because it does
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not happen to please his appetite in all its wantonness. She was more successful in comedy, in Beatrice particularly; but let her beware imitation, that bane of nature, truth, and genius; an indifferent original, is commonly preferable to a good copy; a perfection imitated, often proves a blemish; what then shall we say of real faults at second hand? The first argues a want of genius, but the other a deficiency of understanding. This bare mention will, I hope, be sufficient to put her upon her guard against any thing of the kind. For more particular information, let her turn to the latter part of my account of Mrs. Pritchard; there she may see her faults: again and again, she cannot be too cautious; let her keep a strict watch over herself, every thing is catching from those we love, and have cause to admire.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Mr. BARRY.

FEW people are ignorant that we are indebted to Ireland, for the birth of Mr. Barry, and to his early misfortunes, for his coming on the stage; where he now shines with so much profit to himself, and pleasure to the public. Dublin saw with astonishment his first attempt; he shot at once a perfect Othello, which continues still to be his favourite character. Never did young actor shew such judgment, in the choice of his first part; for if we consider critically his exterior powers, we can

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no longer wonder at his success ; nature has been so particular in her prodigality to him, that one would almost imagine, she did it with a view to fit him out for the exhibition of Othello ; first, the graces of manly beauty are so favourably blended in his person, with majesty and softness, as equally to make him look the warrior, command the respect due to a general, and make the greatest excess of love appear natural, both in him who loves, and in the person who loves him.

Then his voice ! this last has been always greatly praised, but not always judiciously. Many have I heard, who admired it for its sweetness and harmony ; but I think they, on this occasion, shew rather a feeling of the pleasure they receive, than a sense of the manner in which it is conveyed to them ; if I mistake not, sweetness and harmony do not constitute that actor's justly admired organ ; it is between the treble and base, rather hollow and deep, as if it came immediately from the breast and lungs. This renders it very fit for the utterance of the inward notes of tender pangs, stifled, struggling, or indeed strong passions of any kind, where the powers may be supposed to be oppressed by the weight of the emotion, and thereby debarred from their utmost and loudest exertion. Besides, it is clear, and distinct ; but its greatest perfection is its prodigious flexibility, whereby it may be brought to bend at will, to the most sudden and most difficult transitions, from one passion to another ; from despair, to a transport of joy ; from the extreme of tender love, to the extreme of jealousy, &c. Those breaks, as they are called
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in the stage-phrase, are thick-sown in Othello, and are to be found in most eminent tragedy-parts. Mr. Barry is conscious of this excellence, and he is apt to be a little lavish in the application of it.

I have heard it alledged against his voice, that it is not proportioned to his size, and dis-appoints the expectation raised by his person; and also, that it is only fit for the expression of distress, not of despair, of pity, nor of fury; in a word, of the tender, not of the terrible. This objection, by asserting too much, overshoots itself, and says nothing. Had they only asserted, that it is fitter for the one, than for the other, there might have been some truth in their observation; but that Mr. Barry's is often adequate to the exhibition of the terrible in its utmost height, I appeal to all impartial judges, who have seen him in the aforesaid part of Othello, especially in that famous scene, when, in his madness of jealousy, he collars Iago, thundering out this speech:

*Villain, be sure you prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof,
Or by the worth of mine eternal soul,
'Twere better for thee thou wer't born a dog,
Than answer my wak'd wrath.*

Or this:

*If thou dost slander her, and torture me,
Never pray more, abandon all remorse
On horror's head, horrors accumulate
Do deeds to make heav'n weep, all earth amaz'd,
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than this—*

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On the whole, I think his voice is the voice of the passions, but it is not that of description or declamation, which require a more steady tenour than he is master of.

Few actors ever had so many warm friends and enemies, both blind in their praises and censures; but of the two his friends are by much the most reasonable. Often have I laughed at the poor shifts to which the ill-nature of his enemies has been reduced. Who could credit it? I have heard his very figure objected to; according to one he is too tall; another pretends he is not well set together; a third will attack his face, and tell you, the want of pliancy and mutability in the muscles of it renders it unmeaning; others again will maintain his eyes say nothing. The three first are so ridiculous in their assertions, they don't deserve an answer; and I refer the last-mentioned critics to Mr. Barry's performance of the character already mentioned; where, if they are not absolutely blinded by their prejudices, they may experience the dumb eloquence of his eyes, when their colour, set off by the hue of the Moorish complexion, and rendered thereby more striking, becomes capable of conveying his soul's meaning to the most distant spectator. As for me, I could never observe any natural blemishes in his person; I wish I could say as much of acquired ones; he has certainly some of those; but the greatest is a stoop in his neck, and a bend in his knees, as if he was ashamed of his superior stature, and desirous to level it to the common standard.

Mr. ARTHUR.

Mr. Arthur's reputation bears no manner of proportion to his merit, which in general is much more felt than attended to; few actors give more pleasure, none reap less fame and applause, comparatively speaking. This disproportion has always struck me, and may, I think, be easily accounted for from two reasons, both very little to the honour of the public taste; the first is, the propriety and justness of behaviour, which does never run into buffoonery, and sacrifice truth and sense to applause; Mr. Arthur is seldom more than what he should be; he has not the false ambition to catch the approbation of the croud with bold absurdities and unnatural ridicules. The second reason is, the small number of spectators who frequent Covent-garden playhouse; they may approve, but are too few to give fame. What inauspicious hag of a fairy presided at the building of this ill-fated house, and doomed it to eternal solitude by an unconquerable spell? That spell is prejudice and fashion, and may well be stiled unconquerable, since it is proof against the united talents of a Barry, and of an Arthur; let not the buskin's pride start at my joining together two names so unequally famous; Mr. Barry is incontestably the first of those who confine their talents within the limits of tragedy; Mr. Arthur has a right to the same rank among the mere comedians; so far things are equal; there let us drop the comparison, and suspend the final sentence till it is decided, which of the two theatrical muses has the best title to the pre-eminence.

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The characters he mostly appears in are the old men, the country squires, the clowns, &c. which may all be reduced under the two general denominations of knave and fool. That there is an affinity between those two characters, and that there is scarce any knave without some mixture of folly, and no fool without some real or affected cunning, is an observation of old standing ; a judicious application of that maxim to the business of the stage is Mr. Arthur's principal merit. Cunning or folly, or both, have always a share in his performance. That theatrical chemist possesses the secret to blend and combine, in a thousand different proportions, those two ingredients, according to the different shapes he is to assume ; there is no part of his person but has some share in the process ; his eyes in particular have an odd cast, very expressive of either, or of both. His features are very variable, and there runs thro' his whole countenance and performance a certain ludicrous gravity, that commands laughter irresistibly ; all those he manages with great judgment. His organs, I own, are not altogether equal to the execution of his conceptions ; but then the voice of a Stentor would be lost in such a vacuum. What a pity such a performer's merit should be shown to benches ! Unknown, as he almost is at Covent garden, he would at Drury-lane be the idol of the town.

Mr. SHUTER.

Mr. Shuter owes every thing to nature, to nature unimproved, but by the experience which he may have acquired since he commenced actor ;

art or education claim no share in his success. This may by some be objected to as a deficiency, nor do I offer it as a merit and a matter of praise; yet I think it has been so far of service to Mr. Shuter, as it has left his natural parts untainted by imitation; he is undoubtedly an original actor.

He has strong features, and is happy in a peculiar turn of face, which, without any natural deformity, may be thrown by various alterations of the muscles of the cheeks, or rather of the mouth and nose, into many very ridiculous shapes; these, tho' a little bordering on grimace, are seldom disagreeable, and often proper in some odd characters; at least they never fail to raise laughter; and their end is answered. His eyes are expressive, and don't want that ridiculous demureness, the soul of humour, tho', I must own, he is a little apt to laugh at his own jest.

His voice has not much natural variety, but it abounds in affected tones, and awkward variations, which in most of his parts more than supply that deficiency. In a word, his whole countenance, behaviour and person fall naturally into what is laughable; but that spirit of drolery is not always governable, it is hard-mouthed, and often runs away with the spirit of his part.

Mr. Shuter has it in his power to be a good comedian, but he often drops the comedian, to be laughed at as a comical man.

Mr. RYAN.

Mr. Ryan is the oldest player on the English stage. He was no inconsiderable part of what we old men call the stage's golden age, when a
Wilks,

Wilks, a Booth, a Colley Cibber, and an Oldfield shone at once. I myself remember the time, when Mr. Ryan, at Lincoln's-inn-fields play-house, filled the same parts that Mr. Wilks then acted at Drury-lane, and was thought sometimes to divide the town. I am glad to see him able to go still with so much spirit through parts wherein he was eminent in his younger days. The public is now with regard to him in the case of the old woman in Phœdrus, who, having found an empty bottle, still perfumed with the sediment of a noble wine, exclaimed

*O suavis anima, qualem te dicam bonam
Ante hâc fuisse, tales cum sint reliquæ.*

MR. SMITH.

Mr. Smith made his first appearance in the character of Theodosius in *The Force of Love* at Covent-garden, where he has continued to act ever since. It was then thought imprudent in him to have made choice of that part, which is only the second in the play, where he must have appeared to such disadvantage near Varanes, and such a Varanes. I join in the censure, but not for the same reasons only; Mr. Barry's superiority, both in the part and performance, must certainly have been a great disadvantage; yet I am of opinion Mr. Smith laboured under one still greater, I mean the resemblance his manner of acting remarkably bears to that of Mr. Barry.

His fond admiration of this actor often betrays him into a likeness, which, I think, hurts both, when they are both on the stage together; gestures,

gestures, deportment, nay even inflections, as far as the inferior pliancy of Mr. Smith's voice will allow it, are the same in both.

I have already said something of the dreadful effects of imitation ; thither I refer Mr. Smith. I will only add to what I have said, that imitation is generally hurtful, and never necessary ; for as all the passions are to be found more or less in each man's breast, so each man's voice, each man's face have their proper expression of those passions, out of which, if you happen to stray through imitation, or false feeling, every part of your behaviour must appear awkward and unnatural.

*Format enim natura prius nos intus ad omnes
Fortunarum habitus ; irritat, suscitât irâ
Atque ad humum mærore gravi deducit & angit.*

The greatest part of an actor's labour falls to the share of the understanding. Study your part, possess yourself with the true spirit of it, seize every characteristic circumstance ; and your figure and voice will of their own accord fall into their proper expression of what you feel ; that expression, besides the certain merit of appearing natural, cannot but be grateful, unless, by over-feeling, or rather by over-acting, you strain the muscles of your face into a grimace, as it is but too often the case with young beginners ; or again, unless your figure be in itself disagreeable, a defect with which no one should venture on the exhibition of a tragedy-hero ; it is manifest that Mr. Smith is not within the reach of the last-mentioned charge : his figure is one of the genteelst on the stage ; but imitation
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makes him liable to the reproach of distorting his features.

His vocal delivery suffers still more from this fault ; for, as I take it, he speaks on the stage in a feigned voice ; a species of voice, which though sometimes as agreeable as a good natural one, will not bear much straining, and then through an imitation of certain inflexions it becomes doubly unnatural ; it grates the ear, and adds false tones and discordant notes to the mouthing, which is almost inseparable from it.

All I have here said amounts to no more, than that imitation may prove this very promising actor's ruin, unless he keeps a watchful guard over himself. Let him be but what nature has made him, and I don't see what can make him despair of pleasing in his own right, and of attaining as an original, the reputation he vainly pretends to as a copy. Of two men that run in a narrow path, the one who follows can never hope to get a-head of the other ; but let him step out of that path, and then he may avail himself with success of his strength and agility.

However, as things are now, I greatly prefer in him the comedian to the tragedian ; in comedy he is more an original, his performance is more spirited, more self-bred, as Dryden terms it ; his eyes have naturally a rakish leer, which suits very well the modern fine gentleman, and the agreeable debauché : would he turn himself more that way, few have a chance to equal him ; for, besides the advantage of looking the character, he will find but very few competitors, at least, very successful ones in his way, if you except one performer of note, who, in his laudable ambition of excelling in all characters,

acters, has made a few occasional excursions into this province. Mrs. Woffington's retreat from the stage, leaves the part of Sir Harry Wildair vacant—I hope the hint will not be lost.

Mr. Ross.

Mr. Ross was early a favourite; his figure might have insured success to a performer of a merit much inferior to his. At Drury-Lane, near Mrs. Cibber's, Miss Macklin's, and Mrs. Davies's truly feminine charms, he enjoyed the benefit of being handsome without any incovenience; but at Covent-garden, he is, I think, too much so; the ladies of that house have no reason to congratulate themselves on Mr. Rich's new acquisition; I do not see how they could come off on a comparison; the smoothness of his complexion, and the softness of his looks, might at least vye with theirs; this disproportion is disadvantageous to both; he thereby appears more effeminate, they more masculine; Elvira may now, methinks, woo Carlos in Love makes a Man, without indecency; or Hippolita pass for Don Philip in She would and She would not, without shocking probability.

Another disadvantage he labours under, is his being rather too plump-faced to show off the distention or relaxation of the muscles, in exhibiting the passions. That it is they that speak to the spectator the soul's situation, is obvious, and may be evinced from the common practice of sculptors, who never chuse a plump-model, when passions are to be expressed; not that I mean an actor should be a skeleton; but he ought

ought to be no fatter than to allow the muscles to come out, and form strong and visible lines.

I would not have it inferred from what has been said here, that I am of the opinion of those who stile Mr. Ross a handsome piece of still-life; on the contrary, as he has had my particular attention, I fancy I know him, and from what I have seen him do in his *Castalio*, *Oroonoko*, *Bevil*, but especially in his last attempt of *Othello*, I am persuaded that all his blemishes may be either palliated, or remedied, if he would take the trouble to exert all his powers, and put as much action as he can into his performance; thereby, he would shake off that appearance of carelessness too observable in his deportment.

His voice is agreeable, but not animated enough; it is not, *I LOVE YOU*, that has got the better of a prude's scruples, fixed the inconstancy of a coquette, or lulled virtue's self asleep; the magick lies not in the words, or even in the voice; it lies all in the tone, in the utterance, in the looks of him who speaks them.

Mr. D Y E R.

It was in Ireland, his native country, that Mr. Dyer first felt and obeyed the histrionic demon; in what character and with what success he appeared I could never learn. As to his success, I conjecture it to have been great, from the effect he had on me when I first saw him; it was in *Modely* in the Custom of the Manor, where his ease, his prodigious flow of spirits, and his figure, struck and pleased me; but on a second, third, and fourth visit, I fancied I discovered

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too much resemblance between his Count Basset, his Modely, his Clodio, and even his Tom in the Conscious Lovers.

I will not pronounce this sameness want of genius ; for he has variety ; but one would imagine that he exhausts and displays his whole stock of gestures and action in each part, so as to be forced in the next to borrow from the former, to fill up the performance ; in a word, what variety he is master of, he employs entirely in adorning each particular part, not in distinguishing the parts from each other. I therefore would advise him, as the only means of procuring further success, to make it henceforth his study to find out the characteristick differences between this and that character, so that he may vary his exhibition of them accordingly. He pleases already, thereby he will please more ; but it would be very imprudent in him to roam out of that set of lively characters which he now acts in comedy, as they are the only parts where he can make any advantage of the uneven smartness of his voice. Those dancing and airy notes would but ill-become more sedate characters ; they have something ludicrous, which, tho' genteel, debar him from all hopes of ever making a figure in the buskin ; where, to be useful, he may from time to time supply a vacancy, but never fill a character.

Mr. SPARKS.

Mr. Sparks commenced actor as well as Mr. Dyer in Ireland ; his reception there, as well as here, ran into no extream ; very good in some parts, he is at least tolerable in any he undertakes.

takes: The same understanding and good sense that keep him from mistaking the characters he is put upon, made him discern early those that become best his voice and person; they have both an honest roughness, an emblem, as I hear, of his private character. We might, perhaps, wish in vain for a better Kent in Lear, Clytus in Alexander, Ventidius in All for Love, &c. he has also in his countenance a half laugh, a mischievous leer, which may easily be improved into hypocrisy; and does not look amiss in a Dr. Wolf, a Maskwell, and the Spanish Fryar. The worst of him is his action, which consists of incoherent motions, that are to the body, what a grimace is to the face; but this springs from a laudable source, an eager desire, which he mistakes for the power of affecting strongly his audience; that desire hurries him often out of nature, so as to betray him into uncoothness, when he strives to express more than he can, or should feel; he has great beauties when he personates Mr. Barry's friend; one would imagine there is then something in his looks more than acting, he is so natural.

Mrs. BELLAMY.

The reader has already had room to observe, that the stage of Dublin is our principal nursery for actors and actresses. Mrs. Bellamy is also of that growth, and continued there as long as it was necessary to let her acquire strength enough to bear transplanting with success. She found at her arrival here, our English public as kind as her countrymen had been, a happiness the more to be wondered at, as she came

to share the same parts with Mrs. Cibber, then in her zenith of powers, charms and favour; she has ever since remained in possession of them at either house.

Her talents lie chiefly to the pathetic; she has strong sensations of the tender; habit has not yet steeled her heart, nor dried her eyes of the precious fluid; she is not like most of the other actresses, reduced to the poor shift of hiding her face, when her situation demands that her eyes should overflow with grief; real, undissembled tears, then speak her feeling, and call forth fellow-drops from every eye, much more forcibly than the most graceful display of the handkerchief. She has besides in her looks, in the scenes of distress, a soft wildness, which commands pity; but her action is not clear of affectation; her motions are too much prepared and studied; they savour too much of the looking-glass.

Her voice is pleasing, not unmanageable, and follows pretty well her sense of each situation; but its strength is very limited; and when she forces it out of those narrow bounds which nature has set to it, it becomes hoarse, harsh and untuneable; this defect of her voice excludes her from any hopes of succeeding in parts where rage, jealousy, &c. are to be exhibited.

The farther I proceed in my accounts of the performers of this house, the more I think they want of success owing to the mismanagement of their chief, who, in his theatrical conduct resembles a certain painter, who, desirous to draw a perfect Venus, borrowed from several of the finest women of his age, each particular excellent feature, but was so injudicious in the
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composition, as to form a monster out of all those collected beauties. Who but a fool, or an enemy, could have suffered or obliged her to undertake the part of lady Macbeth, the most cruel female character, perhaps, ever ventured on any stage? Her performance of it, I own, was not uncooth, but her every look was so out of character, that one might have without impropriety addressed her in those words of Lear, to trusty Kent in the stocks: *who is't that has so thy place mistook, to set thee here?*

Mrs. WOFFINGTON.

This season is marked with a great calamity for the stage; the loss we have had of this charming actress is daily more and more felt by the public. What a croud of characters have disappeared with her! We may see Millamant, Aura, Hippolita burlesqued, but we shall no more see them performed. What pity, that charming well-managed figure, those pretty affectations, cannot be fixed on paper, and made to live for the instruction of young beginners! but alas! these are things which the most indifferent memory can better paint to each individual's imagination, than the best pen or pencil.

She was the best lively coquette that ever appeared on our stage except Mrs. Oldfield; and in general it may be said of her, that she attempted no character in comedy wherein she was not pleasing. No body could have disputed her the first rank among the female part of her profession, if Nature, otherwise so prodigal to her, had crowned her gifts with a more pleasing voice. I will not dwell on this defect,

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it was too manifest ; yet it must be owned, she always showed great judgment in the management of it. I could have wished also, that she did not distort her mouth, and all the lower part of her face, into little better than deformity, in the expression of cunning and slyness.

Little can be said of her tragedy-acting ; at her return from France, she strove to introduce here many of the declamatory tones and laboured gestures peculiar to that stage and nation ; but though very improper for our words, images and feeling, they passed uncensured under the sanction of this loved actress. Many have since mistook this toleration for a formal approbation, and strove to follow Mrs. Woffington's example. Mrs. Bellamy for instance has adopted a great deal of her theatric deportment. This in Mrs. Bellamy I will only stile imitation ; but in the lady whom Mr. R— has thought proper to impose on us for Mrs. Woffington's successor in all her parts, it is rank mimicry. Was not our loss sufficient, without the additional re-mortification of being plagued nightly with a disagreeable remembrancer of one, who will ever live in the memory of all the lovers of the stage, or admirers of beauty ?

Mrs. GREEN.

From the zeal for imitation, which seems to prevail so much among secondary performers, one would imagine that they take the public to be of the taste of those curious librarians, who care not for variety of books, but are indefatigable in procuring variety of editions of some favourite works.

Mrs.

Mrs. Green is a second edition of Mrs. Clive, but much less than the first in bulk, merit and contents ; yet not entirely made up of repetitions, nor without alterations, a few for the better, and some for the worse.

It is a sort of misfortune for this actress, that we have not yet adopted the French custom of making important characters of the chamber-maids. She is possessed in an eminent degree of all the requisites necessary to excel in that province, where her great humour, spirits, smart lively voice, and agreeable pertness would be most luckily placed. She is perhaps a little too affected ; but that which is a fault in some of the characters she now acts, would become a perfection, if those parts of chamber-maids were numerous enough to take up intirely an actress, so as to dispense her from meddling with any other parts ; her excess of affectation would suit very well the exhibition of the second-hand airs that are proper to that class of women. I don't mean by this that she is unfit for any other characters ; was I to insinuate any such thing, I must speak against my knowledge and feeling ; there are number of parts wherein she is eminent, and without exception matchless ; among others, Miss Lucy in the Virgin unmasked ; but in general affectation is the bane of her performance ; that, and no inconsiderable mixture of imitation, have greatly cramped the growth of her talents and fame ; yet, as both proceed from the desire of pleasing, she will soon get rid of them, if she can be once sensible, that Nature has put it absolutely in her power to be a most agreeable original without any foreign aids.

Mrs.

Mrs. PITT.

Although I mention Mrs. Pitt last of all the performers of this house, the readers must not take it as a tacit acknowledgement that I think her worthy no better rank. On the contrary, I look upon her as the best woman comedian in Covent-garden. She has been for some years the only actress who has exhibited the superannuated Coquettes, and her performance of them has been such, as left the spectator no room to wish a better; but now she is going to have a very dangerous rival in Mrs. Clive; who intends to act lady Wishfort for her benefit. Of all the female characters in comedy, this province requires most genuine humour; that is the reason why Mrs. Pitt excels in them, being possessed in an eminent degree of that essential qualification. She has also a great deal of pertness, which in the chamber-maids is very agreeable and necessary.

Among the rest of the performers of either house, there are several, who, though not eminent, give great satisfaction, and might have ranked with some of those I have mentioned, without any disparagement to the dignity of the latter: but I have in general followed the opinion of the town in my choice, thought not in my judgment of those I have drawn. Mr. Ridout, for instance, might have been praised for his decency, which renders him at least supportable in any of those parts, which the necessity of the house he is engaged in, and the favour of the manager impose upon him.

Mr.

Mr. Holland at the other house gives us very great hopes of seeing him one day appear to advantage in the second parts of tragedy. I should have placed him immediately after Mr. Garrick, as the shadow follows the body; he has all the merit a copy can pretend to; his face and voice are not disagreeable; and he cannot fail of being an actor of note, when a little more experience shall have given him the command of both; he may then please in his own right; but at present his deportment is very faulty, it wants freedom; but that may be easily remedied by observation, fencing, dancing, &c.

Most of the other actors will scarce forgive my silence with regard to them. Some I have passed by, only for fear of running this into too great a length; among those are Mr. Davies, Mrs. Davies, Mrs. Hamilton, &c. Others I have omitted for no other motive, than to decline the disagreeable task of blaming, without tempering the censure with some mixture of praise; I was loth to forfeit the character of indulgence, which I am conscious I have maintained through so many criticisms; the last mentioned class of actors are very numerous; now they come to take a profession they are so unequal to, I know not, as there are so many trades which require hands and no heads; one might apply to them an old fable, where a Crow, willing to imitate an Eagle, who had just carried off a lamb, lights on the fattest sheep; but having unluckily intangled her talons in the fleece, she flutters in vain to get loose, and is taken and rooked at, the butt of jest and laughter. However, I have afforded them the best advice I could.

Since I am so good at counselling, I am resolved to try my hand further, and venture an important piece of advice to managers in general, which will be no improper conclusion of this article: but as my authority may weigh little with those gentlemen, I will give it them in the words of Plautus, who was certainly a man of some knowledge in these affairs.

*Quodque ad ludorum curatores attinet
Ne palma detur cuicumque artifici injuria
Neve ambitionis causâ extrudantur foras
Quó deteriores ante ponantur bonis.*

“ As to managers of theatres, let them beware partiality in the distribution of rewards and parts. Let them take heed not to discourage performers of real talents, to gratify the false ambition of some, who have no other merit than their favour.”

C O N C L U S I O N.

I Cannot but be sensible how insufficient these criticisms must appear to every reader, after all the pains I have bestowed on them. The objects of the actor's labour, and consequently the qualifications necessary to attain perfection in each particular, are so manifold and various, that to have ascertained the merit of each of the gentlemen or ladies mentioned here, I must have swelled this essay beyond all reasonable bounds. And after all, what had I done?

Given

Given my own private opinion, and perhaps satisfied very few readers of the justness of my judgment.

If therefore I offer to the public the following summary view of my opinion with regard to the performers on the English stage; it is rather as a hint, which I leave him to improve according to his own feeling, than as a definitive judgment of my own on the merit of the actors; it is rather the means of gaining a standard, than a standard of taste.

I call it the scale of the Tragedians and Comedians; it is modelled on the scale of painters, by the famous Mr. De Piles: this method, or manner of forming a judgment on painting, has been happily imitated by a physician of genius, who applied it to the poets of our nation; after those two great men, I intend to try how far it may be applicable to acting.

De Piles has divided painting into four different branches, *composition, design, colouring and expression*; in the same manner I think tragedy-acting, besides several other secondary requisites, demands the following five, to wit, *genius, judgment, expression, action and voice*. Comedy requires other qualifications, very different from those; the *genius* of comedy implies a feeling of circumstances of ridicule, whereas, the *genius* of tragedy implies a feeling of the passions of a higher nature; *judgment* is certainly necessary in both, and in both imports a knowledge of the characters, situations, and of truth and its limits; to those two requisites *genius and judgment*, I will add *vis comica*, and

variety; the last of which, tho' necessary in tragedy, is much more so in the sock, the characters of private life, which are the natural objects of ridicule, being much more varied than those of heroes or villains, which always run into extremes, and must consequently be liable to a greater likeness and resemblance. I therefore reckon four requisites for comedy; namely, *genius. judgment, vis comica, and variety*; then I divide my weights of comparison into twenty degrees; like Mr. De Piles, I suppose the twentieth to be the height of perfection, which in acting consists in carrying the illusion so far, as to deceive the spectator into a persuasion, that the actor is the very man he represents; that nobody has yet attained; the nineteenth degree is that perfection which has been attained in some particular characters, as for instance, by Mr. Garrick in Lear, Richard, Abel Drugger, &c. by Mr. Macklin in the Jew Shylock, and Sir Gilbert Wrangle; by Mr. Barry in Othello; by Mrs. Cibber in Isabella and Alicia; by Mr. Mossop in the fifth act of Agis; by Mr. Quin in Falstaff, &c. But in general no one actor can be said to have constantly reached that degree in all his different parts; I therefore will set down the eighteenth degree as the highest we have any instance of.

The Scale of TRAGEDIANS.

	Genius.	Judgment.	Expression.	Action.	Voice.
Quin — — — —	15	17	14	15	17
Garrick — — — —	17	18	18	17	18
Barry — — — —	15	13	14	14	16
Moffop — — — —	14	14	14	13	16
Smith — — — —	10	9	10	12	12
Havard — — — —	12	14	12	14	12
Ross — — — —	10	11	10	9	11
Berry — — — —	9	13	11	7	5
Holland — — — —	10	9	10	8	13
Sheridan — — — —	12	16	15	10	7
Sparks — — — —	9	12	11	8	8
Mrs. Cibber — — — —	16	15	17	16	18
Mrs. Bellamy — — — —	13	12	14	12	14
Mrs. Pritchard — — — —	12	13	12	8	13
Miss Macklin — — — —	11	11	12	9	13
Mrs. Woffington — — — —	12	13	14	14	6

The

The Scale of COMEDIANS.

	Genius.	Judgment.	Vis Comica.	Variety.
Quin — — — —	16	16	17	11
Theo. Cibber — — — —	12	8	13	10
Macklin — — — —	10	17	12	10
Garrick — — — —	18	16	18	18
Arthur — — — —	16	14	16	11
Woodward — — — —	15	12	13	13
Shuter — — — —	16	9	17	16
Yates — — — —	13	10	12	12
Berry — — — —	12	11	11	10
Palmer — — — —	12	13	9	11
Smith — — — —	11	10	9	10
Dyer — — — —	11	12	11	10
Tafwell — — — —	12	15	12	11
Mrs. Clive — — — —	17	16	17	15
Mrs. Pritchard — — — —	15	14	10	13
Miss Macklin — — — —	12	13	11	12
Mrs. Green — — — —	14	10	12	13
Mrs. Pitt — — — —	13	12	12	13
Mrs. Woffington — — — —	16	15	12	15
* Mr. Foote — — — —				

* This gentleman's talents are so much out of the common road, that I cannot at present settle what his excellence is in each particular, and will therefore leave every reader to rate his merit according to his own feeling.

Observations on dramatic pieces, new or revived with alterations, that have been performed at either house, since the first of January, 1757.

The REPRISALS, or the Tars of Old England, a FARCE.

Nothing but my promise to give some observations on all the new dramatic productions, could have prevailed on me to wade through this farce; to bestow a regular criticism on each defect of this little piece, from the title inclusively, it would be making myself in some measure, an accomplice with the author, by calling forth from oblivion, this short lived child of dulness, besides, the inconvenience of running this into a greater length than the farce itself. I shall therefore content myself with the bare mention of the most glaring absurdities, such as making the theatre of Drury-lane represent the cabin of a small frigate, making the hero of the piece an English gentleman, to leave his mistress in the hands of an enemy, and a rival, in order to provide for his own safety; and introducing his mistress singing, when she has every thing to fear from the meanest of mortals, &c. &c. &c. No humour, no plot, no scenes, no characters, poor English, horrid French, and his own country-dialect, the Scotch as ill characterised as the Irish. In a word,

word, *take it for all in all*, I hope I *ne'er shall look upon its like again*. I hear the author himself is come over to the public opinion, and acknowledges it to be a very indifferent performance; it is not only very indifferent, but the most indifferent that has appeared for years, Dr. H——'s *Critical Minute* always excepted, and might be brought as an incontestible proof, by Mr. Garrick's friends, that, whatever people may say, he is not over-nice in the acceptance of works for the stage. I should not have been so severe on this farce, if the author's reputation had depended on it; but as he has wrote several other works that have met with the public approbation, I thought he might without any great detriment to his fame sacrifice this trifle to the utmost severity of criticism.

THE AUTHOR, A FARCE.

By Mr. FOOTE.

I Read this farce, before I could see it performed; the judgment I then passed on it, was not in its favour, and the exhibition did not make any material alteration in my way of thinking. I laughed indeed much more than I had done on reading it, but on recollection, I was not a little displeased, to find that I was laughing at an individual, not at a species; this reflection which showed me the author in a very despicable light, added to my spleen, against the work; I say spleen, for so I think I may call the disgust I took at the piece, at a sort of disappointment I had experienced on the perusal of it.

Few

Few dramatic pieces ever raised my expectations higher, and fewer still ever sunk more below them, than this little farce has done ; the first scenes of it (I except the very first, which is only preparatory to a very bad plot) have a great deal of merit.

The manner of the Author young Cape's first setting out, is luckily turned. There is something truly humorous in the gradation and exposition of the succeeding characters ; the Printer's Devil, the Poet, and the Bookseller, as they drop in, are so excellently drawn, that I cannot but regret that Mr. Foote did not contrive some plot that might have moved within a circle of such characters ; had he done it, I am positive, that without any greater efforts of genius than what he has exerted in those few scenes, he might have wrote a farce, deserving to be ranked among the best of those little compositions ; but from the instant of Cadwallader's appearance, the piece sinks ; we lose sight of the main character ; Cape, as an author, disappears, totally eclipsed by Cadwallader's absurdity ; there is not afterwards one single syllable in the rest of Cape's part, but what might be spoke by any other character.

I am sensible Mr. Foote did not much consult the reader's entertainment, when he wrote this farce ; he was intirely taken up with the more profitable part, the performance ; to this I attribute the negligence to be observed here and there in the stile.

In a very ingenious and masterly prologue to this farce, he has taken some trouble to set in a strong and agreeable light, the impossibility of pleasing all people ; but that of all people, he

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should chuse to please the lowest and the most ill-natured, I cannot but wonder at.

His two main characters are not more unskilfully, than ill-naturedly chosen; the convulsive motions of Cadwallader, may indeed extort a laugh from the spectators, but will also make the mimic very contemptible; there is certainly no humour in grimaces, nor in a continual repetition of *hey! hold! hey!* Mrs. Cadwallader is somewhat preferable; at least, she appeared so to me, perhaps only from Mrs. Clive's superior performance.

The rest of the *personæ* have nothing striking, neither one way nor other; they fulfil merely and simply the end of their creation, which was to bring the plot forward.

I have already given my opinion of the plot; the unnatural supposition on which the whole moves, need not be exposed; it is remarkably absurd, and as to the under-plot, to get Cadwallader out of the way, it is still worse; to give the old governor a part in that frolicksome piece of buffoonery, shocks all propriety; and in fact the whole is absolutely calculated to give Cadwallader an opportunity of maiming ridiculously two fantastic words, *Jablanowsky* and *Potowowsky*, and of spouting out, *damn his soup!* There are nevertheless two scenes in the second act, that have pleased me; the first, where Cape is introduced making love to Mrs. Cadwallader, (there is something of a pleasing extravagance in it) and the last, wherein the same Mrs. Cadwallader, or rather, Mrs. Clive, shines greatly.

In my account of the actors of Drury-lane, I should have mentioned Mr. Foote; but the great resemblance I have observed in him, between

tween the author and the actor, made me delay his character, till this opportunity. His merit in either capacity, seems to me to be a compound of ill-nature, mimicry and humour, blended in equal proportions. I cannot better express my sense of his talents as an actor, or a farce-writer, than by saying that he is no history-painter, but that he has a knack at daubing portraits with a Dutch-pencil.

In the advertisement prefixed to this tract, the author declares he expects no return of money from the critics; but hopes to meet from the public with more indulgence, which he thinks himself entitled to, by the pains he has taken to have taken to please them, having planned, written, and brought on this tract in less than a month; a very extraordinary claim indeed! From this I judge that to be a gentleman writer, to be one of those who write with ease; and though it cannot altogether be said of his work, that it is altogether without beauties, yet he ought to be reminded, that we have not yet seen those beauties in productions, though good in themselves, as derogatory to that respect which the town may expect as their right from every writer. However, his hopes have not been frustrated; he has experienced something more than indulgence from the town; in a word, his success has at least equalled his merit; for the more standing a new character, and carrying at three times of former famous, sometimes timely allusion, has been given with a comical, and not improbable figure, or two, to the same author to more success than this piece has met with: I am sure on the side of the

Observations on the New Farce,
called the MALE-COQUETTE,
or 1757.

IN the advertisement prefixed to this farce, the author declares he expects no manner of mercy from the critics, but hopes to meet from the public with more indulgence; which he thinks himself entitled to, by the little pains he boasts to have taken to please them, having planned, written, and brought on this farce in less than a month; a very extraordinary claim indeed! from this I judge him to be a gentleman writer, to be one of those who write with ease; and though it cannot altogether be said of his work, that it is altogether without beauties, yet he ought to be reminded, that we have a right to reject those mushroom productions, though good in themselves, as derogatory to that respect which the town may expect as their right from every writer. However, his hopes have not been frustrated, he has experienced something more than indulgence from the town; in a word, his success has at least equalled his merits; for the mere starting a new character, and carrying it thro' two acts of sometimes humorous, sometimes flimsy dialogue, intermixed with a comical, though improbable situation or two, cannot entitle an author to more success than this piece has met with: I am ever on the side of indulgence;

gence ; an audience in these times should be a tender nurse ; for the dramatic genius of this age is but a sickly brat, and requires great pains to rear it to any tolerable strength ; therefore unless you will have the whole race extinct, (which those who ought to be the chief guardians seem to intend) care should be taken even of those hasty productions, which, like this, came before their time, and whose delicate constitutions cannot altogether bear the blast of criticism ; not that I think this without merit ; on the contrary, the aim of this attempt is to point out its beauties as well as faults.

The first thing to be considered is the main character, the Male-coquette. I wish, for the sake of mankind, I could dispute the reality and existence of it ; but common as it is, it had hitherto escaped the pencil of our comedy-writers ; it is a Being imported from France, which, like all their fashions, we have improved for the worse ; it is with those improvements, our author presents the public with a Daffodil ; the *Fat Puni*, and *L'homme Abonnesfortunes*, tho' an exact likeness of a certain species of men, then common in France, are but faint sketches of our English character ; the *Fat* is indeed contented with that slender diet, reputation ; but it is for want of being able to obtain a more substantial food for his vanity ; and *L'homme Abonnesfortunes*, is as happy, and happier than he chuses the world should know ; but Daffodil compares himself to a sportsman, who has no pleasure but in the chase ; reputation is all he aims at. Besides, cowardice is a main ingredient in the character of a Daffodil, but the courage of *L'homme Abonnesfortunes* is neither tried, nor called in question ; nay, his last adventure,

venture, where he ventures blindfold with an unknown man to a rendezvous, impeaches him rather of rashness; and as to the *Fat*, he cannot be stiled a coward, since his courage is put to a very unfair tryal, and fails him only, when pinioned in women apparel; without arms or power, to escape or to move, he thinks himself at the mercy, and in the hands of an enraged husband. These are, I think, material differences, and are sufficient to ascertain the originality of the English character, without speaking of the additional vices of gaming, horse-racing, &c. I know it will be urged, that all I have said amounts to an acknowledgment that this is a hotch-potch of the Blood, the Buck, the Flash, the Fribble, &c. To which I answer, that if this hotch-potch is in nature, if that hotch-potch is capable of being humorously and wittily exposed, that hotch-potch is true comedy, and fit for the stage; but the point in debate is to know whether the author has made a proper use of the character. Such is my opinion of the main figure; but I don't think quite so favourably of all the situations, groupes, attitudes, which our painter has contrived for the display of it; first, his Male-coquette is not contrasted after a manner enough striking; Truly, I believe, might and should have been drawn more at full, and rendered more interesting; his honour, his discretion, his good-sense, in a word, every good quality which could form an opposition with Daffodil's vices, should have been exhibited in a stronger light. A dramatic author ought always to imitate that famous artist, who, desirous to draw the figure of a giant in a small compass, painted him asleep, and round him a croud of little

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satyrs measuring his fingers with their Thyrsus; and they should remember that contrast is the life of every sort of painting.

Sophia is a pleasing medley of good sense and sprightliness; as to her frolic, as she calls it, it is a bold stroke, and reaches the last verge of propriety, if it does not over-leap it; that the author was sensible of, as appears by the several acknowledgements he has thrown here and there of the strangeness of it; I therefore will not proceed to a formal censure of that agreeable fault, which I scarce wish mended; there would be a kind of ingratitude, to sap the ground-work of a superstructure that has afforded me some pleasure. Now for an inquiry into the situations.

The three first scenes of the first act, seem rather designed to prepare the plot, than introduce the character, which is indeed sufficiently ascertained by the very title; for Daffodil answers exactly, as a man, our notions of a coquette, one fond of the reputation of being loved, and tantalizing her dupes with expectations she never intends to realize——Those scenes do not merely answer the intended purpose of opening the plot, but swarm with beauties; Sophia's tryal of her disguise on Tukely, is alone sufficient to atone for greater blemishes than what I have already hinted; nothing raises higher my opinion of the author's judgment, than the gradation of boldness, which in Sophia increases in proportion as she observed the confirmed effect of Tukely's mistake.

Daffodil's picture, which is only chalked in the first scenes, is finished in that of the toilet, with a masterly hand. Was I to speak without reserve, my sense of that scene, with Daffodil's
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soliloquy, and his groom's letter, I might incur the reproach of flattery ; however, as I am countenanced in my opinion by the public approbation, I will venture to pronounce the whole act good, from the opening, to Daffodil's interview with Mrs. Dotterel, exclusively. I am sorry I cannot extend my approbation to this last ; I know there are some critics who think it allowable in the comic writer, as well as actor, to represent objects a little bigger than the life ; but sure, probability ought still to be, in some degree, the measure of their exaggeration ; and for my part, I do not feel how it is possible that a young man should resist the attacks of a lady, young and handsome ; one, whom the author supposes to have warmed old age into love and matrimony. This the author will, perhaps, attribute to my want of feeling ; I do not decline the charge, but then shall not I be liable to the contrary reproach, of feeling too much ; when I tell him, I thought it a little indecent to hear Mrs. Dotterel upbraiding the wretch with his *mean, unmanly evasions*, and his thirst after the reputation of *having that, which he has neither power, nor spirit to enjoy*. If the author meant to keep up the character he gives of Mrs. Dotterel, he has certainly succeeded ; for those reproaches are very consistent with the rest of the lady's behaviour, through the whole scene ; there the *contrast* is rather too strong—The Marchese de Macaroni comes in in a very critical time ; and the act ends, as it had begun, with decency and spirit.

The first scenes of the second act, have so far a resemblance with those of the first, that they are an introduction to the plot of this act, and that

that the same *personæ* come on the stage in the same order; that sameness excepted, the same praises that I gave to the beginning of the first act are applicable, tho' not quite in the same degree, to the opening of this; so, without any further repetition, let us hasten to ———'s, where we shall find Daffodil with the rest of his honourable club, sporting away a few hundreds at those bets, already wittily expos'd in Mr. Garrick's character of Lord Chalkstone in *Lethe*; together with all the extravagant improvements the passion of gaming has introduced within these eighteen months past, under the several shapes of betting, matching, pitting, &c. But among the many characteristical strokes wherewith this scene abounds, none pleased me so much, as when to my lord's betting that Dizzy don't live till morning, and barring all assistance; Daffodil answers, "No, no, we are upon honour, there shall be none, else it would be a bubble-bet." A true and poignant satyr, but perhaps not sufficiently keen to pierce the breasts of those unhappy persons, whom fashion and habit have rendered callous and unfeeling. The satyr of this club scene was not universally felt, and the laughter did not become again general, till that short and poignant appendix to it, when the drawers are introduced aping in pence, the more prodigal follies of their betters. Till then, the effect had been mostly confined to the boxes, where many, I thought, spoke in their smiles and mutual looks, their consciousness of the truth of the picture. I must own, I was not a little pleased, to see part of the audience stare with astonishment at the exhibition of this extravagance;

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gance; but how long will this ignorance last? This fashion, like all the rest, will travel and spread.

Now we are come to the concluding scenes, let us examine them thoroughly, sum up the evidence, and try whether we could not bring in the author guilty of plagiarism; if there is any thing that may make him liable to this charge, it must be in these scenes; hitherto, every thing, good or bad, is new and indisputably his; for as to the trifling likeness between the toilet-scene of the first act, and that in *L'homme Abonnesfortunes*, it was a necessary consequence of the trifling resemblance between the characters, and it would be as ridiculous to alledge it against him, as to mistake one man for another, because they are neither of them noseless; but, in the denouement there is certainly something more; Daffodil and Moncade (*L'homme Abonnesfortunes*) are both decoyed to a false rendezvous, and both strive to blind their supposed new admirer by a sacrifice of their former mistresses, who in both denouements are within hearing. These are great circumstances of likeness, but the differences are also great: the French-man speaks to one of his mistresses, the English-man to his rival disguised; the French-man exposes only his falsehood, the Englishman his falsehood, vanity and cowardice; and then the superior pleasantry in making the *blow-up*, in part, the effect of the fop's own contrivance; but on the other hand, there is a much greater probability in Moncade's mistaking one woman for another, than in Daffodil being frightened out of his senses by a woman in men's cloaths, and his making love

to a man in women's apparel. However, I might have looked upon those differences as deviations intended to save the author from the charge of plagiarism, if I had not observed in the French denouement, several beauties which could not have escaped our supposed plagiarist, had he so much as looked into the French play; but I am almost ashamed of searching so scrupulously into the merits and defects of such a trifle; it is this critical refinement; this spirit of finding fault, which is too much the characteristic of these times, that will in the end nip genius in the bud, and prevent the growth of dramatic poetry, or what is worse, stunt it to a regular mediocrity.

The farce ends by a proper moral, after Mr. Tukely has promised the ladies that he would insist on Mr. Daffodil's making them ample satisfaction; *Quere*, what satisfaction?

On the whole, the beauties of this little comedy exceed the faults in number and importance; the plot is boldly imagined and simply executed; the dialogue spirited, elegant, and natural, but perhaps, too full of quaint, modern phrases; which will be one day as unintelligible to our children, as they would be to our ancestors; the manners are true, and well drawn, yet I must own I have some exception to the boldness of them? Is not there a little indelicacy, in making a man of honour, by his indiscreet questions, the means of exposing a number of ladies? To that, the author may answer that Tukely intends to cure them; and that moreover they are by that means intrusted with each other's secrets, and therefore in some degree obliged to mutual secrecy; but then what

excuse is there for Mrs. Dotterel's *aside* * during the conversation between Tukely and Daffodil. It is, I own, consistent with the rest of her behaviour ; but that behaviour was a fault.

We are absolutely in the dark with regard to the writer of this Farce, but was I to judge from a certain ease and spiritedness in the dialogue, I should suspect the author of the Apprentice; but some peculiarities of stile and situations make me turn my suspicions another way ; if I am not mistaken, the author of this has given several works of the kind. Whosoever he is, his discretion has hitherto been success proof.

ISABELLA, or the FATAL MARRIAGE.

A Tragedy altered from SOUTHERN.

HWO this absurdity of tacking together two different plots, the one comic, the other tragic, got footing on the stage, might furnish out a long dissertation, it comes originally from Spain, where it is common, and travelled to England through France. † It made no

* Daffodil — what assurances can I give you to abate your fear. Mrs. Dotterel [*Aside.*] very slender ones, I can assure her.

† A comedian called Monfleury, author of several plays, made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce this species of the drama on the French stage. He is the only French author I can at present recollect, who has been guilty of this absurdity.

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stay in the last mentioned place, not having the sanction of any great genius to countenance its naturalization ; but on its arrival in England it fell into hands capable of procuring it a welcome. Our Dryden embraced with eagerness an opportunity of shining in a species of drama hitherto unattempted* ; his success proved fatal to our stage, as it led astray many writers of great abilities. Among others, Southern author of the play now before us, followed Dryden's example ; but he owns in his dedicatory epistle, that in following that established custom, he has acted against his better judgment. His merit as a tragedy-writer, cannot be disputed ; but as to his comedies they are rather dissolute than witty or humourous. The comic plot of this play for example, tho' taken from a very humorous novel of Boccaci †, is as unskilfully as dissolutely managed : the alterer has done a real service to the public in disincumbering this tragedy from all that lumber ; but

* Shakespear is here entirely out of the question ; I mean to speak only of those plays that have two intrigues, and two subjects, such as this play of the Fatal Marriage, Oroonoko, the Spanish Fryar, &c. all Shakespear's tragic plays have indeed some mixture of comedy, but then the comic scenes are only accidental, and have a necessary connection with the rest : His tragedies may, I think, be defined, great events exhibited with all their possible concomitant circumstances whether comic tragical ; a species of drama very different from what we are now speaking of.

† It was translated into French by La Fontaine, and is among his tales, under the name of Feronde, or le Purgatoire.

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he should not have done the work by halves ; the appearance of the Porter and Nurse a little altered and shorten'd might be over-looked in the first act, as they are instrumental to heighten Isabella's misfortunes ; but in the fifth act their ridiculous reflections and poor no-jests break the distress in a manner not more disagreeable than absurd, and should have been unmercifully lopt off, as well as some of the under-wrote speeches scattered here and there ; but above all, I wonder how the alterer came to retain the beginning of that speech of old Baldwin which closes the play. Was there ever any thing more unnatural than those poor far-fetched conceits, those school boy's tropes, wherewith it is fraught, when it should overflow with grief, compassion, and repentance.

*Poor wretched orphan of most wretched parents,
Scaping the storm thou art thrown upon a rock
To perish there. The very rocks would melt,
Soften their nature, sure ! to foster thee :
I find it by myself ; my flinty heart
That barren rock on which thy father starved
Opens its springs of nourishment to thee,
There is not a vein but shall run milk for thee.*

Quere. What are the springs of nourishment of a rock ? Does excess of misery express itself so ? On the whole, I think it were to be wished for the play the alterer had been less sparing of his trouble in one point particularly, that is in remedying the want of connection between the third and fourth act ; for in fact, as the play stands now, it contains two separate plays, the first of three acts takes in the Marriage of Villeroy with Isabella ; the second is of two acts, the subject whereof is the return of Byron, his death,

death, and that of Isabella. These two plays are intirely unconnected and independant; and yet methinks it would be no hard matter to rectify this fault, by making Carlos receive in the third act a letter informing him of his brother's return; he might then have resolved on the murder in the words of the soliloquy of the fifth act.

*A younger brother! I was one too long,
Now to prevent my being so again
We must be sudden. Younger brothers
Are but lawful bastards of another name,
&c. &c.*

There that soliloquy would have been much better timed than just when he is going to commit the murder; deliberation is then unnatural; Carlos might also have been made the contriver of the letter brought to Villeroy in order to get him out of the way, and have the stage to himself for the execution of his designs: all this would have rendered Carlos a more striking character, whereas now is no more than a mere machine made only to work the plot.

Various are the opinions concerning the subject of this play, a great many admire it as the master-piece of tragedy; others condemn it absolutely as insufficient; both are I think partly right in their judgment. The distress of the three first acts is exquisitely wrought and withal naturally; but the fourth seems to me to have little or no grounds, but in Isabella's diseased fancy, and romantic notion; tho' I must own nothing gives me a higher opinion of Southern's abilities than his having created so much distress
our

out of a mere trifle, and his having wrought it to such a pitch as madness without making it look forced and unnatural ; yet I cannot but think that the foundation is by much too weak for the superstructure. As to the distress of the fifth, it is prodigious ; it might perhaps have been improved in the circumstances ; but indeed it is already so great, that I should deem the least improvement a fault, as it must carry the concern beyond what any audience can well bear with pleasure.

The GAMESTERS. A COMEDY.

Altered from SHIRLEY'S GAMESTER, and acted for the first time at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, on the
of January 1758.

MR. James Shirley, the original author of this comedy, was a contemporary of Shakespear and Ben Johnson ; the latter he used to call his beloved master ; if so, Shirley was no very apt scholar ; for he does not seem by any of his plays to have much profited by the precepts or exempt of that his master, the most regular of writers, as he is everywhere guilty of some striking violation of that first of rules, the unity of subject. All his plays have double intrigues as different as they are unconnected ; his comedy of the Gamester like all the rest, is clogged with an under-plot. This fault the
pre-

present alterer * means to remedy ; to that effect he has intirely left out the novel-intrigue and characters of Violante, Beaumont, Valentine, and Leonora ; therefore the greater my wonder that he should be guilty of such an oversight, as to name the play *the Gamesters*, a title which essentially destroys that very unity of subject he has otherwise taken so much trouble to establish. There are, I own, two gamesters of note in the play, but one of them is so much more the principal character, and the tryal to which the favourite passion is exposed is so much greater, that I think he might without impropriety ingross entirely the name of Gamester, as he ingrosses the public attention through the whole play. I should therefore prefer the original title (the Gamester) as right in fact, though it may be said to be intentionally wrong ; for it appears that Shirley by it meant Hazard, whom in the

* This is the second alteration that has appeared of this play of Shirley. 1711. Mr. Charles Johnson gave it altered much more in the manners than plot, but in both for the worse ; he magnified, multiplied, divided and mixed the characters in a strange manner : he introduced a greater number of gamesters, gave a long part to his Spitfire (Dwindle in the original) made two characters, Volatile and Hazard, out of the original Hazard, and one Sir Tristram Cash out of Barnacle, and Sir Richard Hurray ; in a word, he has carefully retained and improved the original faults, and by aukward attempts towards modernising the manners and persons he has formed a neutral abortive monster, a fantastie picture, as unlike the present age, as that of king James I. no wonder that it was short-lived, and sunk soon into oblivion.

Dramatis Personæ he stiles particularly the Gamester, which must be a mistake, as it is evident that Wilding is the character wherein he has mostly displayed the force of the passion of gaming, and that Hazard is only an under-part. That an author should in his own play mistake the principal character is very extraordinary, but not more extraordinary than true; for it is in consequence of that mistake that Shirley, from the beginning, shews Hazard as a gamester, without dropping the least hint of Wilding's being one, till the middle of the second act; in this, as well as in another particular that will be mentioned hereafter, the alterer has retained a blemish which he might easily have remedied, by giving the audience an earlier insight into that essential part of Wilding's character; gaming. The other fault I just now hinted, is his having preserved the useless character of Dwindle. The peculiarity of his dress and appearance raises an expectation which is not answered in the sequel, and therefore is a fault; this unmeaning attendant of young Barnacle should therefore have found as little mercy as the characters of the Bye-plot; nay, in strict criticism, the two Barnacles might have had no better fate; but altho' their connection with the main plot is rather too loose and episodic, they are privileged by their merit and pleasantry: this the alterer was sensible of, and strove to remedy; he plumes himself greatly on having made their dependence on the rest of the characters closer and more important. I approve very much of his design, but very little of the manner in which he has contrived and effected it; is it not making rather too free with Hazard, to make him
again

again accept money to speak to Penelope, to his own mistress, in favour of young Barnacle? He has, I own, before been bribed to let himself be beat; then he might plead the distress he was in; but here that excuse is no more, and though it may be allowed natural in Barnacle to propose it to him after he had found him so pliant, it is, I think, rather too mean and unnatural in Hazard to close with this second offer, now he is possessed of a hundred pounds improved by greedy hope, an essential characteristic of a gamester, to a thousand per cent.

In all this he does not seem to have acted with that judgment he has manifested in a much nicer point; in the Suspence, wherein the audience, as well as Wilding, are kept in the original with regard to the issue of the rendezvous. It was at first shocking and immoral; but now the audience being let into the secret, by means of the additional scenes that close so agreeably the third act, is made to enjoy, with an unmixed satisfaction, Wilding's trouble and punishment; the humour is improved, the indecency is no more, and yet there remains matter enough for suspense and expectation, to keep the attention awake through the two last acts.

One of the greatest faults of this play, is the obsoleteness of the language and manners, but this is much less a fault of Shirley's, than of the Alterer's, who might have obviated this objection, either by modernising both, or by the easier expedient of dressing the characters in the old dresses of that age; this last expedient would have entitled the play to a great many allowances, both in the manners and language, which it has no right to under the present mo-

dern dresses. In every thing else, the play is much improved, and the reader will find no little difficulty to distinguish what is the Alterer's from what is Shirley's; he has so well imitated his stile, and fallen into his turn of thought and expression. On the whole, I wish he had not kept so close to the original; he might with Shirley's materials a little more altered, have made this play one of the best in the English language. However, even as it is, it will stand the test of comparison with some of our most renowned comedies. The single character of Wilding is a Master-piece scarcely to be paralleled; the tryal he is made to go thro' is well introduced, still better executed, and perfectly comical in its consequences; to have formed and displayed such a profligate compound of vices, and yet to have found means to make his conversion appear natural and unavoidable, is alone sufficient to stamp the author a great man. *The English stage had indeed in that age reached its point of glory,* whose inferior geniuses could produce such noble works.

DOUGLAS

DOUGLAS. A TRAGEDY;

Presented at Covent - Garden in the year
1757.

MANY have been the adventures and travels of this play. It was, they say, some years ago presented to the acting-manager of Drury-Lane, but by him rejected*; on its return to his native country, Scotland, it was greedily accepted of by the company of actors then at Edinburgh, who performed it with very great applause, though not without some opposition from some of the country zealots: this success recommended it to the Covent-Garden manager, who invited it back again to London.

It is not surprising that a Scotch audience should shew some favour to a play, the author and subject whereof were Scotch; that might account for the success of an indifferent work, but the applause it met with in London is the true test of its merit, where none of the above considerations could influence the judgment of the spectators.

* It would be unfair to hide from the public what Mr. Garrick's friends alledge in his favour; they pretend that Douglas when first presented was not fit for the stage, and that it has been greatly altered since; the latter part of this assertion is not denied by the friends of the author, and I think this acknowledgement may be taken as a strong presumptive proof of the truth of the first.

It

It is not paying it a very great, much less an undeserved compliment to give it the preference over all the dramatic pieces that have been presented at either house these six or seven years; this general acknowledgment of this piece's merit does not exclude a few particular objections, which, I think, may be justly made to several parts of it.

The most comprehensive of those objections is the resemblance it bears to *Merope*; *Mathilda*, young *Douglas*, and *Norval*, are evidently modelled, feature for feature, on *Merope*, *Dorilas*, and *Narbas*; this resemblance would have been fatal to a play of middling merit, as it destroyed one of the most efficacious causes of a play's success; to wit, the suspense and ignorance wherein the audience is kept, with regard to the principal transactions. There is scarce any body a little acquainted with plays or romances, but guessed, on the young man's first appearance that he was the son of *Mathilda*; and yet the two scenes of discovery had a prodigious effect, an unanswerable proof of their excellence.

The next objection is, that the stile of the play is not altogether equal; the author seems to have industriously husbanded his strength; and though his piece abounds with the greatest beauties, I wish he had been more sparing of make-weight scenes. The second act only is intirely free from them, all the rest are clogged with one or more of those unnecessary soliloquies or intreviews. The second scene of the first act is of this kind, as it lets us into no secret but what we are more amply informed of in the exposition scene between *Mathilda* and *Anna*; it introduces but lamely the character of *Randolph*,
and

and answers scarce any other end, but to give Mathilda an opportunity of speaking this fine speech :

*War I detest : but war with foreign foes,
Whose manners, language, and whose looks are strange
Is not so horrid, nor to me so hateful,
As that which with our neighbours oft we wage.
A river here, there an ideal line
By fancy drawn, divides the sister kingdoms.
On each side dwells a people similar
As twins are to each other, valiant both,
Both for their valour famous thro' the world.
Yet will they not unite their kindred arms,
And if they must have war, wage distant war,
But with each other fight in cruel conflict.
Gallant in strife, and noble in their ire
The battle is their pastime : they go forth
Gay in the morning as to summer sport ;
When ev'ning comes, the glory of the morn,
The youthful warrior is a clod of clay.
Thus fall the prime of either hapless land,
And such the fruit of Scotch and English wars.*

Yet beautiful as this speech is, the author has in it sacrificed propriety to applause; this lamentable description of the wars between the Scotch and English is scarce justifiable in Mathilda, whose griefs sprang from wars still more unnatural ; wars between Scots and Scots ; these should have been uppermost in her thought. Whatever may be objected to this scene, the spectator is over paid by the following between Mathilda and Anna : nothing can be more artfully prepared, and more pathetically managed than the exposition ; there runs through that scene,

scene, and indeed through the whole character of Mathilda, a most affecting simplicity; this short narration may be offered for a sample thereof :

*Didst thou not ask, what had my sorrows been,
If I in early youth had lost a husband?
In the cold bosom of the earth is lodg'd
Mangled with wounds, the husband of my youth;
And in some cavern of the ocean lies
My child and his——*

The two following acts are in general unexceptionable with regard to the plot or incidents; but as to quote, or even point out each particular beauty would swell this beyond the bounds I have set to myself, I will confine mostly my observations to the faults, as the only means of avoiding prolixity.

Among the few blemishes of this play may be reckoned a certain sameness to be observed in the conclusion of the three first acts; they all three end with a soliloquy of Glenalvon, which soliloquy is in all three introduced much after the same manner.

In the fourth act I see but one necessary scene, that of the interview between Douglas and Mathilda; however, even that might have been delayed till their interview in the wood. I therefore think that the whole act might have been omitted without any detriment to the play; all the rest of that act is intirely superfluous; I would not even have spared that famous narration of Douglas; that narration is fine, but *non erat his locus*, that beauty is ill-timed; the mention of the hermit raises a vain expectation,
and

and therefore is a fault ; as to the trial to which Glenalvon puts Douglas it is trifling and unmeaning ; and I think it ill-judged to make Randolph the dupe of such a shallow artifice, as it must make him appear weak and insignificant.

The fifth act opens ill, the soliloquy of Douglas in the wood is nothing but Jaffier's soliloquy * reversed ; and moreover it contains neither sentiment nor situation. Here end all my objections.

As I am conscious that the above criticisms cannot but acquit me of partiality to the author, I will be the less reserved in my praises of the play in general ; otherwise I should scarce venture to say how much I prefer it, with all its imperfections, to all the tragedies of this novel-kind. This superiority of Douglas I have felt rather as a man than as a critic ; tears were the first praises I gave it ; whether the great effect the distress had on me proceeded merely from the author's skillful manner of managing the subject, or from some peculiar disposition in myself, or from both, I will not pretend to determine ; this I am certain of, that no play except *Lear*, ever made such a strong, such a constant impression on my feeling. At the twentieth reading I am not yet proof against the scenes between Mathilda and Anna, that between the same Mathilda and the old Shepherd, and the two between Douglas and his mother. What inclines me to think that this impression proceeds mostly from the author's

* See the beginning of the second act of *Venice Preserved*.

art, is that the same distress in Merope, though set off with a great deal of apparatus, falls very short of the effect Douglas has on me ; but although my heart and feeling give it in favour of Douglas in the scenes of distress, or of pathetic, yet I cannot allow that those scenes have merit enough to intitle this play to an implicit preference over Merope, even as it is in the English translation, which, I have been told, is greatly inferior to the original French of Monsieur Voltaire.

Was I to draw the character of the author from this play, I think I could not do it more justly than by applying to him, what Mr. De Piles says of a certain great painter, to wit, that he failed in the composition and design, but was a very great master of colouring and expression; Mr. H— has not displayed any great wealth of invention, either in the contrivance, number or connection of his incidents ; but I think he has been peculiarly happy and skilful in his choice and colouring of the characters, but especially his Norval and Douglas. I can add nothing to what has already been said of his Norval ; the success it met with was as just as it was great ; the same or little less may be said of the performance of that part by Mr. Sparks, who, conscious of his excellence in it, has made choice of it for his benefit ; however, notwithstanding the many beauties of the part of the Shepherd I can scarce allow it to be superior to Douglas : so much am I taken with the ingenious use the author has made in the last-mentioned part of the known spirit of knight-errantry, for which the age and family whence he has taken his he-

roe are so conspicuous ; this spirit runs thro' the whole part, and renders it no less natural than lively and pleasing.

AGIS. A TRAGEDY;

Acted for the first time at Drury-Lane, on Tuesday the 21st of February 1758.

THE famous laws of Lycurgus, which, whilst duly observed, had rendered Sparta the umpire of Greece, and the terror of Asia, had fallen into contempt, and the Spartans with their virtue, had lost their power and influence over the Grecian republicks, when that share of the Lacedemonian crown, which belonged to the family of the Proclidæ, descended from Eudamidas, to his son Agis, the hero of this tragedy.

This young prince, worthy a happier fortune, as soon as he came to the throne, formed the noble project of reviving the effect with the cause, the glory of Sparta, with the laws of Lycurgus. An absolute equality of possessions, was a fundamental point of the Spartan constitution, as established by their law-giver; this Agis attempted to restore, but met with a strenuous opposition from the faction of the nobles, who had the balance of land-property on their side; at their head appeared the other king Leonidas; him, Lysander, Agis's fastest friend, undertook to remove, and accordingly got him banished by a decree of the people. This great obstacle being removed,

Agis's projects were received with great approbation; in his first attempt, which was to cancel all debts, he over-powered all his opponents, and carried his point without difficulty; in this he was powerfully seconded by his uncle Agesilaus, a man of no principles, who was very rich, and greatly in debt. This man, who had only his own interest in view, seeing his ends fully answered by this act, invented several pretences to put off the division of lands, by which he was to be a great loser; and having been left at Sparta by Agis, who was obliged to go on some military expedition, he behaved with such insolence, that the people disgusted at his administration, recalled Leonidas. The faction of the nobles having thereby got the upper-hand, elected into the office of Ephori, instead of Agesilaus and the others of Agis's party, people who were devoted to their interest.

Agis was forced to fly to the temple of Minerva for refuge, from whence he never went out but to go to the baths; and then he always had with him some of his friends to defend him, in case of any attempt from Leonidas and the Ephori; but Leonidas, who thought he had but a very precarious tenure of the crown, as long as Agis was living, bribed one Amphares, a treacherous friend of Agis, to deliver him up to the new Ephori; this villain, who had borrowed jewels and plate to a great value from Agesistrata, mother to Agis, imagined he should remain in possession of those, if he could remove her son, and therefore undertook to make Leonidas easy. In order to compass this, he pretended great friendship to Agis, and as he was coming from the baths with that prince,
under

under pretence of escorting him, he seized on him, and with the help of two of his accomplices, Demochares, and Archefilaus, he dragged him to the common prison, where the Ephori sat ready to judge him.

They first asked him haughtily, what could induce him to attempt a change in the government; a scornful smile was his answer; they reproved him for it, and as they wanted him to lay the blame on Agesilaus and his friend Lysander, as having forced him to do what he had done; he replied that he had been constrained by no man, that the project was his, and that had he succeeded, he should have revived Lycurgus's laws, and have reigned by them; the terror of approaching death could not oblige him to recant that noble confession; whereupon he was condemned to be strangled; but the officers, and even the mercenary soldiers refused to lend hands to that horrid decree; the want of an executioner had saved the life of the virtuous king; if the traitor Demochares, after reviling them for cowards, had not undertaken the shameful office; he himself pushed Agis into the place where the execution was to be performed; the king submitted to death with a magnanimity worthy of his life, and just before he was strangled; seeing a soldier who was bemoaning his untimely death, he desired him to spare his tears for those who were his murderers, since his situation was preferable to theirs.

As soon as he was dispatched, Amphares admitted his grand-mother into the prison, where she was immediately put to death. Whilst this last murder was doing, Agesilaus,

sistrata, the unhappy mother of Agis, was waiting at the prison-gate in expectation of seeing her son, whom she imagined living and out of danger ; for Amphares's ingenious cruelty had soothed her with hopes, that the horrid spectacle, she was to be introduced to, might be the more shocking. As soon as he was informed that Archedamia was strangled, he desired Agefistrata to go into the prison, where the first object her eyes met with, was her mother hanging, and the next her son stretched on the floor. She stood some time motionless, but recovering her spirits, she helped the soldiers to take down her mother's body, laid it near her son's, then kissed him and said, *O my son, thy too great mercy has brought thee to this untimely death.* Amphares hearing this, ordered her to be strangled, saying, that since she approved of her son's crimes, she should share his punishment ; she rose immediately, and submitted to her fate without one complaint ; her last words were, *May all this turn to the advantage of Sparta !*

This is the historical fact ; in the use the author has made of it, he has availed himself of that liberty which poets and painters have ever been allowed of adorning historical truth, and even of deviating from it in circumstances of little moment. Agis, Lyfander his friend, Agefistrata his mother, the traitor Amphares, and the *persona muta* Demochares, are the only names he has borrowed from Plutarch ; Sandane, who is represented as a Persian princess, wife to the banished king Leonidas, has also some foundation in history, as the articles of impeachment were, his having travelled into Persia,
and

and having married a foreigner, both which were expressly forbid by the laws of Lycurgus; she therefore is with propriety introduced plotting against Agis; I wish nevertheless, she had been left out, as her part and share in the plot are by much too trifling for the title she bears, and the motives whereby she is actuated. To this it may be answered, that it was necessary to give Amphares a confidant, since the want of one would have obliged the author to multiply the traitor's soliloquies, in order to acquaint the audience with his projects; to which I answer, the soliloquies might have been longer, but could not have been more numerous, since every scene he has with Sandane is closed or introduced with a soliloquy; moreover, nothing heightens so much the character of a villain, than the omission of a confidant; but even allowing the necessity of one, was not Demochares much more fit for that purpose than a queen? The author might have made him as insignificant as he pleased, he having no title to raise our expectation. All the rest of the characters are absolutely fictitious, the most considerable of those is Euanthe an Athenian maid, supposed to have fled from Athens with Lyfander; she is loved by him and Amphares; this double love is the *nodus* of the play, the hinge on which the whole moves.

The first act represents the two parties, Amphares and Sandane on one side, Agis, his Mother, and Euanthe on the other, expecting the issue of a battle, which is to decide their respective hopes; it ends by the arrival of a Thracian officer of Lyfander's army, who acquaints Euanthe of the victory gained by her lover.

lover. This act is not equal to the rest of the play; it does not answer the end of a first act, which is to shew the subject in a clear light; this exposition is so lame and defective, that it is impossible to form from it any sort of judgment of what they are fighting for; besides the whole act is by much too languid for what each party is supposed to have at stake; for both these reasons, I wish Euanthe had appeared sooner; she by a lively expression of her fears, would have rendered the news of Lysander's victory more striking, whereas the fortitude and characteristick steadiness of Agis, must see the danger with too much indifference, to convey a strong idea of the importance of the battle whereof he is expecting the issue; then by introducing Euanthe sooner, and lengthening her scene with Agis, both these defects (the want of clearness, and the want of fire) would have been remedied; for the author might then have made use of Agis's cooler temper to render the exposition clear and distinct, and of Euanthe's womanish fears, to give it that life which now it wants.

The second act prepares the audience to a change in Agis's fortune, and contains a most artful introduction to all the incidents of the rest of the play. There are in this act two masterly scenes, the one between Euanthe and Lysander, the other between Lysander and Agis. In the first Euanthe gets from Lysander a solemn promise, that, whatever happens, he will come to her before he goes on any important undertaking. On this slight foundation, the author has reared up a most noble edifice; that promise is the fountain-head of all the following distress. This scene ascertains the character
of

of Lyfander, as a friend, a lover, and a patriot ; in this last quality he expreffes himfelf with great noblenefs ; there is for example fomething truly fublime in the following lines.

Of common clay and in one common mould
All men are made, but the celeftial fire,
That gives them foul and life, is liberty ;
And I, Prometheus-like, to gain that fire
For Sparta's fons, would brave the bolt of Jove.

It is in this fcene he receives the firft intelligence of fome machinations againft his party ; this in the following he communicates to Agis, who is fhewn here in the moft amiable light, as brave, generous, and merciful, to point out all the beauties of this fcene, I fhould tranfcribe it all. In this fcene they receive fome further intelligence in confirmation of that Lyfander had already received ; whereupon Agis commands his friend to repair instantly to his victorious army, and bring it without delay to Sparta. This fudden change of fortune gives Lyfander an opportunity of making fome reflexions on the uncertainty of human foresight. The following thought on time has ftruck me.

————— Let never man.
Say in the morning that the day's his own ;
Things paft belong to memory alone ;
Things future are the property of hope ;
The narrow line the ifthmus of thofe feas.
The instant fcare divifible is all
That mortals have to ftand on.

So far the act is unexceptionable ; it is thick-
fown with beauties of all forts, sentimental, in-
M cidental,

cidental, and ingenious; but from the instant of Lyfander's departure it droops and degenerates into vain declamation; to fill up the rest of the act, the author has here brought in a very idle scene between Agis and a couple of senators; little better can be said in favour of the procession; however, in this sentence against the latter part of this act, I don't pretend to include Amphares's soliloquy after the procession; it is fine and characteristic; it is a pity he comes only to speak it.

Euanthe just escaped from Amphares's soldiers who had attacked the palace during the procession, comes on the stage frightened, and opens the third act with a strong expression of her fears; her scene with Sandane is far from pleasing; the queen seems to have been introduced to no other purpose, but to insult over the Athenian maid's misfortune, and to advise her to yield to Amphares's proffered love; the author by putting this very strange piece of advice in the mouth of a queen, has, I think, made rather too free with her majesty: it would be much more decent to keep her idle than to give her such a disreputable employment; however, this counsel meets with a warm reception from Euanthe, who gives the queen a severe reproof; but Sandane repays her in kind; whereupon the debate grows warmer every moment; but in the end Euanthe gets so far the better, as to remain last on the field of battle. Sandane's retreat makes room for her interview with Lyfander, who in consequence of his promise, mentioned in the preceding act, comes disguised in the dress of a Helot. Although every body must allow that this scene abounds with beauties, I cannot but be of opinion that Euanthe's counsels to her
lover

lover are too pusillanimous ; even if we consider her as a woman, and no Spartan. This scene in all probability would have appeared to greater advantage than it does now, if, as I have mentioned in another place, the author had thrown more of Euanthe's fears into the first act ; that would have established her character, which is nothing but a compound of timidity and tenderness ; the audience thereby would have been prepared to hear from her this last counsel, when she advises her lover to fly with her and to abandon his king and his country ; which counsel without that preparation has something in it shockingly ungenerous. Lyfander's replies to her make full amends for this fault ; they breathe such nobleness, such love, such generosity, such patriotism ; nothing can be more artful than the manner in which Euanthe comes over to his opinion, and the motive whereby she is actuated to consent to the new perils he is going to expose himself to.

The arrival of Amphares interrupts the scene ; whereupon the false Helot is obliged to retire ; but on hearing his mistress call for help, he returns, and is going to stab the tyrant, when a guard of Thracians interpose ; in the struggle Lyfander wrenches a sword from the hand of a soldier ; and then defies Amphares ; but the villain, instead of accepting the challenge, threatens the life of Euanthe, and so forces the unhappy lover to drop his sword. What a noble tableau could be made out of this one momentary situation ; on one side of the fore-ground the painter might represent Amphares holding his sword to Euanthe's breast, then the Athenian maid stretching her arms to her lover, as encour-

raging him to attack the tyrant ; on the other side Lyfander might be represented ready to drop his sword, difarmed by the danger of his dear Euanthe. The back and middle ground fhould be taken up by the Thracian guard, each foldier thereof fhewing in his looks his feeling of the fcene.

The fecond part of this fcene, tho' a little bordering on declamation, is an agreeable appendix to the firft, and fhows Euanthe more amiable than ſhe has yet appeared. The reft of the act contains nothing very remarkable. I therefore will haften to the fourth, which, I muſt own, is my favourite ; there are no leſs than fix intereſting ſituations in this one act, all connected and dependant. The ſcene opens and diſcovers Lyfander chained and guarded by Thracians : he comes forward, and ſpeaks this ſoliloquy.

Has virtue no prerogative on earth ?
 And can the Gods permit the fall of Agis ?
 They can. 'Tis man's own arrogance arrays him
 In gorgeous titles of excelling nature,
 Care of the Gods, and centre of creation.
 I fear, I fear man's life is but a dream ;
 His ſoul a ſubtle eſſence of the blood,
 A rainbow beauty, made to ſhine a ſpace,
 Then melt and vaniſh into air.
 Ye mighty minds of ſages and of heroes !
 Epaminondas, Plato, great Lycurgus !
 Who once with ſuch transcendent glory ſhone,
 Brighter than all the ſtars that deck the heavens,
 Is your celeftial fire for ever quench'd,
 And nought but aſhes left, the ſport of chance,
 Which veering winds ſtill blow about the world ?
 I will

I will not think so! Yet, alas! the while
 I see and feel presages that alarm.
 If they prove true. If man is like the leaf,
 Which falling from the tree revives no more,
 I shall be shortly dust. That will not hear
 EVANTHE weep, nor see the shame of Sparta!

These doubts concerning the immortality or mortality of the soul, though not a little remarkable in themselves, are still more so from their being spoken by Lyfander; what could induce the author to pitch upon the most learned and philosophic of his heroes to express those doubts? be that as it may, the soliloquy ends with a very fine thought.

Now I'm a living man, my mind is free,
 And, whilst I live and breathe, by heaven I'll act,
 As if I were immortal.

The author himself was so sensible of its beauty, that he has thought proper to repeat it in the very next scene, where the same Lyfander speaking of Agis says:

Rhesus, the generous spirit of that prince,
 Is of a nature that excludes all fear,
 Consideration and respect of self;
 On earth he *acts as if he were* a God,
Immortal and incapable of harm.

That might certainly have been avoided, as well as the following speech which Lyfander addresses to Rhesus.

This day thy generous brother saved my life;
 At his request I yielded up my sword;
 Else had Lyfander like a soldier fall'n.

How

How can we reconcile this assertion, with what we cannot but remember of the remarkable transaction of the third act? How is it consistent with Lysander's character, nay, with reason to say a thing, which on the least recollection must appear false in every sense to Euxus and the audience? the rest of the scene is skillfully managed, and the design of it new; it renders the two brothers very interesting; the manner of fixing the wavering resolution of Euxus is ingenious, and withal natural; in a word, the whole act is the author's master-piece; it is full of well contrived business; and there is between the incidents, a dependance, a connection, which cannot but fix the attention of an audience.

The trial and death of Agis begin the last act; but as the author has not deviated from Plutarch's narration of that event in any material circumstances, little else of the praise due to that scene can come to his share, but what belongs to the dialogue; and even great part of that is built on the hints Plutarch furnished him with. Among the few passages which the author may boast as his own; the following prophetic lamentation over falling Sparta, holds the first rank.

O Lacedæmon, thou art fallen for ever!
 Thy bad estate shall every day grow worse;
 Successive tyrants shall exhaust thy strength,
 Till all thy generous youths have bled in vain;
 At last the consummation of thy woes
 Shall come upon thee; some ambitious foe
 Shall stretch the iron arm of conquest forth,
 And grasp thee in the circle of his empire.

woH

My

My native land, the kingdom of my fathers,
 Shall be no more a nation ! O my country,
 How irreftrievable is thy condition !
 The Macedonian vulture hovers o'er thee,
 Soon to descend, and on thy vitals prey.

Nothing can be more beautiful and poetic than the use the author has made here of his knowledge of history, to render this prophecy the more striking, as it was justified by the events in every particular.

All the subsequent scenes are dedicated to the rest of the characters; from the moment of Agis's death, to the critical arrival of Lysander, and punishment of Amphares, the audience is kept in a most pleasing suspense ; but the great pleasure this suspense gave, seems to me to proceed from one general fault, to wit, the duplicity of interest; had not the author made Lysander equal or even superior to Agis, who, according to all rules, should have been the greatest in the play ; the audience would not have been so solicitous for the welfare of Lysander, and his success would not have made amends to the spectator for Agis's death ; whereas now our joy for the happiness of Lysander, leaves very little room to our sorrow for Agis.

The author seems to have been sensible of this defect by the great pains he has taken to renew the concern, and make it all center in Agis dead, even when the play is to all intents ended ; this he has in some measure brought about by the means of that solemn apparatus of grief, which concludes the representation.

If it was not notoriously known, that the author of Agis is the same to whom we are indebted

debted for Douglas; one would not certainly have suspected those two tragedies to have sprung from the same pen; so different are the talents he has displayed in each. Agis inspires us with admiration; Douglas speaks forcibly to our softer feelings; in Douglas he has shewn himself a perfect master of nature, and the human heart: in Agis of contrivance in point of plot, and incidents. What a master-piece may not we expect from such talents, when united and combined in one tragedy?

F I N I S.

